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AIR FORCE LEADERSHIP INNOVATION  
THROUGH THE UTILIZATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA:  
A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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By  
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A DISSERTATION IN PRACTICE

Submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of Creighton University in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in  
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## Abstract

The field of sociology describes a wealth of leadership practices derived from research conducted across complex fields of study. In one particular field these practices comprise a fundamental element of the successful integration of social media as a professional communication method within the United States Air Force. New leadership practices continue to develop as modern communication technology advances the global reach of social media, thereby influencing the communication of critical information between superiors and subordinates at an accelerated rate. This study utilized a qualitative research methodology to analyze the professional use of social media by commanders in the United States Air Force. Results determined large-scale leadership methods are enhanced through effective intra-organization communication that utilizes social media as an ancillary leadership medium. The application of the purpose statement and research questions utilized existing analysis on this subject to further analyze these relationships. The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify common leadership styles utilized by Air Force commanders who successfully employ social media as an ancillary communication medium with subordinate Airmen at their home-station organizations. A critical examination of data collected resulted in a grounded theory and evidence-based leadership model that combine to effectively enhance professional social media communication between Air Force commanders, subordinate Airmen, and their families.

*Keywords:* Air Force, communication, Facebook, grounded theory, innovation, leadership, qualitative, social media, sociology, United States Air Force, commander.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

**Background of the Problem**

Social media has permeated the world's technologically networked population exponentially since 2004 to the point where connection with more than one social media application is nearly ubiquitous in society. A Belgian research study discovered 94 percent of surveyed secondary and high school students between the ages of 12 and 18 enjoyed various forms of Internet access on a regular basis at home (Beelen, 2010). Within this overwhelming majority, 87 percent claimed membership to at least one social networking site accessed for an average of more than two hours each day (Beelen, 2010). Theories that govern human communication sociology continue to evolve as modern communication technology delivers enhanced social media applications to worldwide users. A significant component of human communication has been influenced by the evolution of these social media applications, specifically Facebook.

In January 2016, Facebook announced more than 1.59 billion monthly users worldwide who utilized their mainstream web-based social media program (Facebook, 2016). A significant proportion of these users continue to challenge the potential for further cultural application of social media platforms far beyond the casual Facebook message between friends. As theorists and sociologists strive to decipher this technological boom and corresponding dependence within everyday life, senior leaders within large organizations have made a concentrated effort to tap into the potential of this modern communication technology. The Department of Defense and the United States Air Force are specific organizations that have incorporated Facebook as a supplementary communication medium used to connect senior Air Force leaders with subordinate

Airmen, their families, and the community.

The Air Force has explored the use of Facebook through the establishment of an *Official Facebook Page* tailored to each Air Force installation. Through this application, resident commanders have direct access to subordinate Airmen who voluntarily opt to receive real-time communication posted to their own personal Facebook page in real time. In each instance where a person agrees to *like* an official Air Force page, senior leaders are granted the enhanced opportunity to communicate exclusively with that individual in real time. Throughout military history, commanders have utilized the traditional all call to organize face-to-face meetings and simultaneously communicate with hundreds of Airmen. While supremely beneficial in nature, these all calls suffer from decreased regularity as their time commitment removes personnel from daily operational commitments.

To combat the substantial loss of production that occurs each time a unit stands down for an hour-long commander's call, these formal face-to-face interactions are traditionally limited to quarterly events. This infrequency of regular face-to-face contact disconnects subordinates with a professional desire for mentorship and an inspired connection with senior leaders. Innovation of professional face-to-face communication through Facebook has enhanced leadership directed communication and the opportunity for increased correspondence between Airmen through professional social media communication. Through the publication of a well-timed Facebook post, a commander gains the instantaneous ability to contact opted-in subordinates with credible information at a moment's notice.

Quality leadership communication is a critical component to the growth and

sustainment of professional organizations that employ subordinates across the globe. The current expansion of the global commerce has further complicated this realm of communication, as employees require innovative strategies to maintain regular professional contact with colleagues abroad (Okoro, 2012). Social media applications present a solution to this technological requirement and provide the capability to deliver professional correspondence in real time. While these applications provide an excellent communication tool, there currently exists a lack of practical theoretical knowledge that identifies the appropriate use and methods in which social media could be professionally implemented and sustained. This study generated a grounded theory and evidence-based leadership model that defines the ideal method for professional Facebook correspondence implemented by commanders with subordinate Airmen at their home-station organizations. The theory enhances intra-organizational communication through education of Air Force leaders on the professional incorporation of social media to achieve effective leadership communication within their unit.

### **Purpose of the Study**

As the United States Air Force remains immersed in global contingency operations, Facebook has emerged as the predominant medium to maintain avenues of professional communication. The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify common leadership styles utilized by Air Force commanders who successfully employ social media as an ancillary communication medium with subordinate Airmen at their home-station organizations. A grounded theory research plan facilitated data collection through face-to-face interviews with active-duty commanders to gauge the effectiveness of their individual leadership styles. Supplementary analysis expanded upon revelations

from each commander to identify successful leadership themes that may be incorporated into the social media leadership ideology for military leaders within the Department of Defense. The summary of this analysis facilitated creation of a leadership model that identifies the *ideal* leadership style for the professional use of social media in the United States Air Force.

### **Qualitative Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify common leadership styles utilized by Air Force commanders who successfully employ social media as an ancillary communication medium with subordinate Airmen at their home-station organizations.

### **Research Questions**

This study was primarily based on a singular over-arching question with five supplementary data collection questions. The primary question:

1. How do Air Force commanders who successfully utilize professional social media communication define leadership?

Five supplementary data collection questions facilitated the identification of common leadership themes unique to the command climate established by each Air Force commander. These five questions included:

1. How have personal leadership developments influenced the commander's approach to professional interaction with Airmen within the organization?
2. What do commanders who utilize social media believe is the climate-perception of their professional interaction through Facebook?
3. How have the leadership styles of commanders who utilize social media been adapted to improve subordinate morale and welfare with the implementation of

Facebook communication?

4. How have suggestions from subordinate Airmen improved the quality of Facebook interaction within the organization?
5. How does the leadership style used during face-to-face contact change when you communicate to subordinates through social media?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study on Air Force leadership innovation through the utilization of social media fills a gap in the professional education of a technology that has changed the way people communicate around the world. While the ideal method of professional communication is conducted with face-to-face contact, the expansion of business interests in global operations limits the quality and frequency of this valuable form of a direct personal exchange. The United States Air Force continues to experiment with the professional use of social media as an ancillary method of communication with subordinates across the base and the globe. With only minimal sociological research that details the recommended theory behind successful leadership through social media, the Air Force is in the midst of a gradual learning process. Through the use of grounded theory research, this study identified eight Air Force commanders as interview subjects with the ability to articulate lessons learned experienced during the incorporation of social media into their leadership toolkit.

The leadership method that generated the greatest reception among Facebook homepage members in the military community, based on commanders' descriptions of responses to their Facebook strategies, aided the formulation of a grounded theory that determines the successful use of social media in the professional environment. From this

development, the future use of social media in the United States Air Force will be enhanced by the purposeful leadership methods implemented during periods where limited military forces are deployed to multiple areas of responsibility in support of global operations. Finally, the current trend of global commerce expansion will become simplified. Communication with employees and business partners will benefit from innovative technology and the grounded theory that will serve as the benchmark for future research on leadership through social media in the civilian business sector (Okoro, 2012). Together, military and civilian organizations alike will benefit from this grounded theory as social media continues to mark a permanent change in the way humans effectively communicate.

### **Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study was to create an evidence-based leadership model that effectively enhances professional social media communication between Air Force commanders, subordinate Airmen, and their families.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The research questions in this study aided the development of a theoretical framework that led to the creation of a grounded theory on how to successfully conduct professional social media communication. It was anticipated that commanders had a well-developed understanding of their personal leadership styles. These questions aided the analysis of the fundamental change in leadership models as the commanders translated intra-organizational communication to social media applications. Using a grounded theory, data was collected via semi-structured personal interviews of active-duty Air Force commanders who regularly utilize an professional social media to

communicate with Airmen assigned within their organization. The results of this study were used to develop a grounded theory of leadership sociology that describes the most effective evidence-based leadership model that incorporates evolving social media technologies.

### **Definition of Relevant Terms**

A summary of relevant terms utilized throughout this dissertation serve to define critical characteristics and Air Force language relevant to the study:

*Air Force Base* – The headquarters of an Air Force installation. Each Air Base is under the command of an Air Force wing commander.

*Facebook* - An online social networking service that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues. The application is available in 37 different languages (Hall, 2013, p. 1).

*Grounded Theory* - To move beyond description, generate or discover a theory for a process or action (Creswell, 2013).

*Social Media* – Includes the technologies, platforms, and services that enable individuals to engage in communication from one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many (Britannica, 2013).

*Commander* - A military officer who holds a commissioned rank in the Air Force.

Charged with the responsibility to command an Air Force organization that maintains a distinct mission with a specific operational scope.

### **Assumptions**

There are three key assumptions throughout this research study. First, the participants answered all interview questions openly and honestly. Second, the subjects

provided valid rich qualitative data. Last, the data collected was not influenced by prior persuasive evidence collected through scholarly papers, academic social media courses, or unknown theoretical publications about the implementation of social media communication within the target population. The combination of these assumptions provided the characteristics and unbiased insight into the leadership sociology of the eight commander interview participants.

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

The two delimitations to this study combine to form a specific research scope that ensured data collected and subsequent analysis led to a grounded theory that defined the parameters of successful leadership through social media. This study primarily focused on Facebook, due to the nearly ubiquitous usage at the time of this study. Furthermore, the research scope was limited to Air Force commanders, offering a valuable perspective at the senior executive level within one branch of the Department of Defense. Last, eight face-to-face interviews were conducted, which limited the generalizability of the resulting theory.

The time allotted for data collection (interviews) for this study was 60 days, which yielded rich descriptions from eight interviews. This approach facilitated development of a valuable grounded theory and evidence-based leadership model that may be expanded through future research in proposed additional subject areas. The combination of lessons learned and final results from this study with those of future investigations strengthened the understanding of sociology behind leadership through social media enabled by this innovative technology.

The researcher controlled three components of the study throughout the duration

of the project. First, interview participants consisted of active duty United States Air Force commanders who utilized professional social media as an ancillary method of weekly intra-unit communication with subordinates assigned to their units. Commanders were selected based on their perceived social media communication and their agreement to participate in this research study. Further, the subjects had a diverse combination of command backgrounds and operational experiences. Second, the study took place from November 2015 to December 2015. Thus, the broad spectrum of professional and cultural influences helped to identify the effect of individual leadership styles implemented by each of the commander interview participants. The combination of three aforementioned delimitations served as the controlled baseline for data collection.

### **Leader's Role and Responsibility in Relation to the Problem**

The goal of this research was to explore the innovation of social media and its utilization as a professional communication medium for United States Air Force leadership. The use of Facebook as a specific social medium has been adopted by the Air Force without concrete forethought placed on how to effectively implement tangible leadership communication through Facebook. Based on this assumption, the qualitative approach that best fits this study was a grounded theory. According to Creswell (2013), "the intent of a grounded theory study is to move beyond description and to generate or discover a theory of "unified theoretical explanation" for a process or action" (p. 83). The goal of interview saturation using Air Force commanders who utilize Facebook as a professional communication medium to distribute information directly to service members and their families served to highlight common leadership styles exemplified through successful interaction.

This approach will be of further use with the incorporation of interactions with leaders who use the system through semi-structured interview questions and observation of the information posted to their professional account. Specifically, these interviews supplemented the data collection by providing comparative information on the emerging use of social media. These connections facilitated the development of the evolving theory on how to incorporate social media into a professional organization successfully (Creswell, 2013, p. 85). While the audience for this study focused on United States Air Force commanders, the results will benefit their subordinate users as well. Existing theories on this subject are inadequate and continue to require further exploration as this realm of human communication expands with the reduction in Department of Defense personnel (Creswell, 2013, p. 134). The main aim of this study was the establishment of a new line of thinking that improves existing communication practices while serving as a model for future development of social media in the professional realm (Creswell, 2013, p. 133). The grounded theory and evidence-based leadership model may provide a foundation for further analysis of social media use in additional service branches within the Department of Defense and civilian sector.

The final beneficial aspect of grounded theory research was the ability of the approach to aid the explanation of a theory that is not currently available (Creswell, 2013, p. 88). While there are a number of theories that exist related to social media utilization and the communication techniques integrated within it, there has been little documented that specifically relates to the military and the Air Force. In an environment where a single leader is charged with the supervision of personnel often spread across the globe,

there is a need for further understanding of social media's use as an effective method of worldwide communication.

### **Summary**

A qualitative research design provided the opportunity to observe participants in their natural setting while collecting data from the precise individuals who experience the leadership challenge of professional social media use first-hand (Creswell, 2013). In addition to the practical collection of source data, the research style was further enhanced by a robust examination of literature and behavioral observation within the community as well as scholarly sources. The complement of such a design enhanced the development of themes within the context of the data collected. These themes, when analyzed across each of the sources of data collection, provided necessary insight into a complex problem that revealed a new social media based grounded theory and evidence-based leadership model compatible with research results.

The design of this grounded theory research plan focused on the face-to-face interviews of active-duty United States Air Force commanders. The study incorporated the professional use of social media communication utilized by each Air Force commander, with the primary goal of creating a leadership model for professional social media communication within the United States Air Force. Fortunately, the Air Force has taken the lead on Facebook use due to widespread deployments and time away from home station that require regular interaction between senior leader and their subordinates. While the safe use of social media is quite simple, taking full advantage of the leadership medium that resides within Facebook incorporates both the Air Force story, unit mission, and the people tasked to accomplish their assigned mission (Vucic, 2012).

The potential to lead an organization in tackling these efforts with success warrants an investigation into the wealth of professional opportunity associated with social media technology. Soliciting interview candidates with unique missions, locations, and professional backgrounds provided valuable context toward the development of leadership theory categories (Creswell, 2013). Due to the nonexistent precedence for social media leadership theories and the inadequate application of traditional leadership theories, the completion of data collection and analysis offers exciting possibilities in the realm of existing capabilities and future technological advancements in social media in the professional world.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

**Introduction**

This study explored an innovative communication phenomenon that has emerged with the rise of the Millennial Generation, or the young adults born between the 1980s to the early 1990s. These Millennials share similarities found in the service member population within the United States Air Force. Many of these modern communication innovations have become barriers between junior professionals and their senior leadership counterparts. These barriers are structural, indicated by lapses in school hours, working hours, and the fight to set aside limited free time for personal and professional growth. Specific to the study's sociological theme of the professional environment, the difficulty in capturing the attention of individual students improves with professional social media utilization of a single medium rather than a split disbursement between Netlog (74%) and Facebook (67%) (Beelen, 2010). Herein lies the value in utilizing the Social Influence Perspective theory in the selection of the ideal professional communication social medium.

The individual perception of value found in media formats is as unique as the individuals that utilize them (Gu, 2011). Without question, the current environment of social communication continues to advance as technology and the thirst for enhanced social interaction drives its progress and shapes professional cultures. Combining this evolution with research focused on the incorporation of modern social accessibility as a professional attribute stands to embrace social media's rapid technological revolution across the generation gap. It is through this concept that a specific leadership model may

erase communication barriers, which erode analogous progress achieved in the social sector beyond the workplace.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify common leadership styles utilized by Air Force commanders who successfully employ social media as an ancillary communication medium with subordinate Airmen at their home-station organizations.

### **Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study was to create an evidence-based leadership model that effectively enhanced professional social media communication between Air Force commanders, subordinate Airmen, and their families.

### **Literature on Social Influence of Social Media**

Influence is rampant within social culture when making the decision to select the ideal medium for social media communication. The primary source of influence is provided through the information communicated by others (Gu, 2011, p. 292). Accuracy in the implementation of this theory creates a problem for senior Air Force leaders charged with the selection and implementation of the ideal social media leadership platform to incorporate within their organizations. In order for professional communication to be effective, information communicated must maintain the ability to effectively influence the desired recipients. Rather than risk the threat of significant financial loss that comes with selecting a poor medium as the solution for such a project, Airmen must be permitted to identify the proper media selection using social influence to facilitate the most cost-effective yet efficient decision (Gu, 2011, p. 296).

### **Socio-Cultural Theory**

The degree in which individual understanding is achieved in communication from senior leadership to the most junior subordinate far exceeds the emphasis on selecting the ideal medium for professional communication. In some cases, more than one form of social media may be required to convey the information required to successfully complete the mission assigned. This process of communicating information within the organization is about the ability to distribute, understand, and share insight through a variety of communication methods. It is critical that leaders understand that utilizing varied media platforms shapes these processes (Dalsgaard, 2011, p. 18). Identifying the desired communication attributes necessary for achieving goal-directed actions can be achieved using Socio-Cultural theory. Knowledge contained in information transmissions can be communicated using both social mediums and within selected communities of practice. Once a leader understands how to tap into the knowledge acquisition process at the individual level using Socio-Cultural theory, the respective communities in which the information is transmitted will increase the flow of information exponentially (Dalsgaard, 2011, p. 21). This sociological theory eases the burden of ensuring individual information reception through the incorporation of information flow within the social network.

In order to utilize the full extent of Socio-Cultural theory, the purpose of the information presented must be effectively communicated to all parties involved. “The emphasis on communication purpose, or why people in a discourse community use language the way they do, entails an analytic focus on the detailed use of language in terms of linguistic style and content” (Lomborg, 2011). However, this language must not

be tailored to an individual, but rather to the social community in which the desired individuals reside. This fact will hold true as social media technology continues to advance due to the dynamic nature of social genres and the multiple dimensions of social processes that exist within a selected medium (Lomborg, 2011, p. 64). Referencing Facebook's ability to *friend* an individual within their medium, participants are able to produce virtual communities within a single social construct (Lee, 2010, p. 137). By recognizing these constructs as they relate to a specific Air Force unit, Socio-Cultural theory implies that leaders are able to reach multiple subordinates through a single communication channel. This concept recognizes the instant communication capabilities of social media and integrates the network connectivity of a social system to form an effective interactivity between social media subscribers and their *real life* social system (Lee, 2010, p. 139).

The final piece of Socio-Cultural theory references the aforementioned collaboration of information received from direct and indirect sources to build a self-sustaining structure of communication flow. Social media as a direct contact to senior leaders should be tailored to challenging the mindset of the individual (Dalsgaard, 2011, p. 21). At first, this concept resonates contrary to the emphasis on community. However, when considering the transmission of knowledge is directed at a receptive community, challenging the individual mindsets within the community creates a self-governed proactive community (Dalsgaard, 2011, p. 22). Utilizing Facebook as a practical example of this theory, consider an Air Force commander who utilizes Facebook as an ancillary medium for communication with subordinates assigned within their unit. Without mandating 100% of Airmen create a user account, commanders can ensure non-users

receive critical information through individuals who challenge themselves to share information from Facebook within their personal face-to-face social network.

### **Literature on Social Media and Leadership**

The aforementioned theory discussion welcomes an exploration into two suppositions drawn from the implications of Social Influence Perspective theory and Socio-Cultural theory. Each offers inspiration for further analysis in the field of study specific to social media use within the United States Air Force. The first addresses the critical process of selecting the medium that yields the desired communication results. Because Airmen rely on community for their professional and social well-being, it is imperative to understand the effect that selection of multiple forms of social media have on the distribution of shared information outside the social media community. Integrating the Air Force into a mainstream social media platform will enhance desired subordinate communication; thereby creating a robust social media environment that breaks down barriers to communication caused by the dynamic nature of military operations.

In 2015, limited Defense spending and sequestration required the Air Force to significantly reduce opportunities available for social media research and development. Historically, a budget for such an endeavor would include funds allocated for substantial case studies that led to the design and implementation of a social medium restricted to use by the United States Air Force. Fortunately, the lack of such funds invites the service to investigate alternate means for ideal platform selection. Rather than start from scratch, utilizing the free service offered by Facebook allows leaders to tap into the twelve year development of the website at no cost to host wings. The selection of a mainstream

social media platform such as Facebook allows commander to gain the ability to populate the “news feed” of selected subordinates with information in real time. The unlimited potential of this platform would arguably take years to develop should the Air Force choose to integrate a privatized version of similar design. Therefore, integration of the Air Force into Facebook will enhance desired subordinate communication based on the robust social media environment already facilitated by the company.

The second supposition explores the potential threat of adversary attack against the social media application utilized by Air Force commanders. The information age has necessitated Air Force personnel integrate with varying levels of official computer networks independently cleared for information at all classification levels. Fortunately, the incorporation of social media as an ancillary communication platform for commanders does not constitute the transmission of any information other than unclassified open source material. The analogy of a bulletin board populated with flyers advertising community events and important safety messages provides a useful application for the far-reaching potential that Facebook offers. A single perceived threat of heightened emphasis on social media within the Air Force may require senior leaders to be increasingly cognizant of their situational awareness and release of real-time geographic location available to the general public. Introducing a mainstream social media platform into the Air Force use will not alter the manpower required to ensure the safety of each user account and the information published within it.

Air Force wing commanders operate a command staff that includes public affairs personnel tasked to provide trusted counsel to leadership; build, maintain, and strengthen Airman morale and readiness; enhance public trust and support; and achieve global

influence and deterrence. In addition, cyber communication personnel specialize in offensive and defensive cyber attack operations to both prosecute and defend against adversary attack in the electronic domain. By restricting information published within each Facebook account to the unclassified open source level, the potential damage associated with the social media site would be restricted to unprofessional posts and the false representation of senior leaders. To combat this threat, cyber and public affairs specialists need only assign one Airman to manage the Facebook account for the purpose of monitoring and publishing desired content. Considering the ideal cost of incorporating a mainstream social media platform such as Facebook, the Air Force stands to make significant communication gains while empowering selected specialists to monitor and protect the associated accounts. This experience will offer increased training opportunities for subordinate Airmen with no foreseeable threat to protected information.

A threat realized by knowledge gained from Social Influence Perspective theory is the potential release of information sensitive to the Air Force and the United States government. Similar to the manner in which media selection is socially selected, adversary network attack capabilities influence the popularity of customarily used media regardless of its identification as the best suited for a particular task (Gu, 2011, p. 296). Especially during times of war, these influences have been accentuated by the tension and dichotomies of the media's role in distributing information (Myburg, 2005). In order to maintain the credibility that must accompany a high level of security, Air Force leaders must ensure their social media application selection meets communication preferences of subordinate Airmen without playing into the hands of the enemy. The defensive network operations required to protect the data are available throughout the Department of

Defense. However, it will be imperative that network attack capabilities are updated to combat enemy enhancements. Being cognizant of Social Influence Perspective theory from the perspective of both allied and enemy forces will enable the ideal influence of information in the progression toward modern social media communication integration.

This defines the opportunity to analyze components represented by arguments detailed in specialized articles. The first of these articles, *The Dynamics of Message Processing Among the Young Generation: The Case of IMalasia*, analyzes how campaign messages oriented toward the young adult population in Malaysia require a new look at information process factors found in each individual (Abdullah & Salman, 2012). Similar to the standard political campaign, messages must be tailored to target audiences in order to secure the desired effect. This responsibility remains true within the Air Force, where each wing commander must manage, equip, and deploy thousands of Airmen annually. In order to successfully accomplish this mission, messages directed through social media at the base population must register with Airmen representing every enlisted, company grade officer, and field grade officer pay grade. The range of ages represented within this sample population spans three generations of individuals who process information in a unique manner unique to their age group.

The second article, *Warfare in the Information Age*, focuses on the change in military tactical ideology represented by culture transition from the Industrial Age to the Information Age (Gherman, 2010). A distinguishing characteristic separating the Industrial Age from the Information Age is the economy of information in the armed forces and the nature of information power associated with it (Gherman, 2010). Since World War II, command structure played a key role in the transfer of critical information

to the designated combatant commander. Thanks to social media resources, increased access to information has necessitated that senior military leaders rethink how intelligence is organized, managed, and controlled (Gherman, 2010). This article provides the strength behind adopting this need for organizational change.

The third and final article, *Transformational Leadership Type in Public and Private Organizations*, poses the question, “What type of leadership is necessary?” (Rus, 2012). In asking this question, the article searches for the type of leadership required to tackle major management problems in large organizations (Rus, 2012). When related to the Air Force’s transition to the Information Age, the article designates the decision-making mechanisms resident in a transformational leadership style as the best option for ensuring organizational success (Rus, 2012). Analyzing the logic within each argument and the validity that supports it serves as the foundation for future exploration into this field of study.

A recurring theme throughout the first of the three articles, *The Dynamics of Message Processing Among the Young Generation: The Case of IMalasia*, remains the necessity for widespread acceptance of information across the various demographics within society. While this theme may seem an obvious campaign plan component, the key question posed in the article relates to the determination of how each communication effort affects the attitude of the target audience (Abdullah & Salman, 2012).

Summarized, the author recognizes that constituents may be read a message without the information conveying the interest intended to be retained. Herein lie the three levels of message processing: exposure, interpretation, and retention (Abdullah & Salman, 2012). These components comprise a theory that the message processing requirements for a

target audience must be determined in order to successfully communicate with them via a social medium.

In order to identify the message processing of the young adult population in Malaysia, the authors surveyed 200 students (between 15 and 30 years of age) in the Klang Valley (Abdullah & Salman, 2012). Results indicated a strong relationship between the various stages of message processing when initiated by a high level of exposure (Abdullah & Salman, 2012). Essentially, a higher the rate of exposure equated to higher corresponding levels of understanding and mission effect (Abdullah & Salman, 2012). An important characteristic of exposure in this study was the use of two or more variations of media (Abdullah & Salman, 2012). The conclusions garnered from this result provide strong support for the benefit of social media to military commanders.

It is important to critically analyze the logic that supports the conclusions from this study. In society, media plays an influential role in conveying information to the general public. By incorporating this concept into government use, politicians can utilize diversified media to avoid communication that is too formal to attract a targeted young audience (Abdullah & Salman, 2012). The author makes a strong case for successful results of this study further validated by similar success achieved by Air Force leadership in their own social media utilization. The lesson learned from this study indicates the importance of media diversity and regular exposure to critical information. Utilizing Facebook as an example, the option for text, photo, and video media consolidated into a single outlet offers a wealth of opportunity for catering to every targeted audience. It is through this level of diversity that people are provided an opportunity to receive an effective message (Abdullah & Salman, 2012).

The ability to communicate information must first be led by an organized system that consolidates messages critical to the target audience. In the second article, *Warfare in the Information Age*, there are two capabilities that must be defined before the military will be able to successfully transition into the Information Age. These capabilities, interoperability and agility, are defined by Network Centric Warfare theory of war (Gherman, 2010). This military response to defining the requirements of entering the Information Age are comprised of a combination of strategies, emerging tactics, techniques, and procedures that have affected Command and Control procedures and the principles underlying the traditional chain of command (Gherman, 2010). Specific to the Industrial Age, limited communication ability required a regimented chain of command that controlled information flow on a need to know basis. This procedure facilitated a filtered communication process that remained uncluttered despite the fog of war. This philosophy changed significantly with the incorporation of Network Centric Warfare.

In 2016, the Information Age utilizes information advantage as a force multiplier in the same manner that superior battlefield tactics and military personnel were engaged in past conflicts (Gherman, 2010). In addition, the ability of a senior commander to maintain information superiority facilitates a decision superiority environment where the commanding general maintains adequate situational awareness of the operational environment. Until the onset of Network Centric Warfare, the operational environment necessitated the delegation of decision authority to battlefield commanders due to their superior situational awareness and inability to communicate real-time information to senior leadership (Gherman, 2010). Therefore, “the objective of decision superiority is to turn an information advantage into a competitive advantage” (Gherman, 2010, p. 104).

This fundamental change in tactical ideology creates the logical argument that the military must adapt and implement a new force structure that enables information exchange at a high rate of speed (Gherman, 2010).

Since the article's publication, the military has conducted a concentrated campaign to incorporate Network Centric Warfare across all military branches. As Gherman (2010) concludes, "at this point the speed of action will have significant effect on the command and control" (p. 104). In essence, this implies that continuous improvements in the rapid exchange of information must be adopted in order to maintain the tactical advantage established by information and decision superiority. The validity of this conclusion is apparent in the adoption of social media as an unclassified component of the professional exchange of information. There are few methods that facilitate a more rapid form of communication to an entire target population.

The third and final article ties together a front line area of interest that requires a transformational leadership style to for successful implementation. *Transformational Leadership Type in Public and Private Organizations* references research that claims transformational leadership in the military is responsible for the key component resident to motivation within the ranks (Rus, 2012). Related to this increased motivation is the encouragement toward increased subordinate involvement and obedience (Rus, 2012). Each of these subordinate attributes are necessary characteristics required to adopt the aforementioned three levels of message processing and facilitate the integration of revised tactical ideology related to Network Centric Warfare.

The research central to Rus' article compared two types of leadership, transformational and transactional, as they related to the performance of 160 employees

in public and private organizations (Rus, 2012). Results of the study were interpreted using a concept of performance derived from a dual perspective of personal satisfaction and labor productivity (Rus, 2012). Data indicated that an atmosphere of comfort, well-being, employee productivity, and satisfaction is high (Rus, 2012). This is reinforced by confirmation of the initial hypothesis that suggested specific productivity and overall satisfaction were considerably higher for the transformational leader (Gus, 2012).

Validity in these results is empowered by the creativity stimulated through guidance of a transformational leader (Gus, 2012). In a time where the Information Age transition necessitates significant change in the realm of the military, the transformational leader serves as a critical component.

### **Air Force Social Media Literature**

Decidedly advantageous communication capabilities create the newfound ability to publicize instant military declarations that unite global allies and effectively thwart offensive advancement from potential adversaries (Thompson, 2014). In 2014, the United States Air Force utilized Twitter as a force multiplier to deter hostilely publicized North Korean nuclear aggression aimed at the United States. Rather than initiate a verbal exchange of military dialogue using the traditional evening news broadcast, the Air Force took decidedly modern action without the exchange of a single word in return. Planned elaborately, yet within the scope of routine military operations, two B-2 stealth bombers prepared to launch a demonstration of their global strike capability. The four officers climbed into their jets two by two and departed for the 38 hour mission that would take them halfway around the world before returning home to their original central Missouri

point of departure (Thompson, 2014). Their target country of their global strike demonstration was North Korea.

Unbeknownst to North Korea was confirmation that bombs (conventional or nuclear) were loaded within the bomb bay of the two stealth bombers. Only after a practice bomb run on the Jik Do bombing range off South Korea's west coast did the inbound threat become a local reality (Thompson, 2014). The execution of this alleged training event concluded with a precisely orchestrated rendezvous with a formation of F-16 multi-role fighter aircraft based out of inland Osan Air Base, South Korea. The resulting formation flew a decidedly non-tactical four-ship formation flight at a flight level well within the visual identification range of Korean civilian and local population observers. The intended result was a resolute success. The Air Force monitored the Twitter exchange of pictures captured by locals who distributed information related to the flyover openly on social media. Within ten minutes, the amateur photos had gone viral around the world as a dominant show of force to neighboring allies and potential foes alike (Thompson, 2014).

By acknowledging the well-known ban on Internet use enacted by the North Korean regime over their civilian population, there were no doubt the photos struck a military chord with the near-term threat of such a dominating formation of aircraft. Without so much as disturbing the wildly sensitive political relations between North Korea and United States, nuclear propaganda threats from the unstable regime ceased instantly (Thompson, 2014). The strategic leadership demonstrated throughout the execution of this Air Force mission provides anecdotal significance to the viability placed on the use of social media by the Department of Defense and United States Air Force.

### **Summary**

The subject of modern communication yields a wealth of diverse introspection into the potential for innovative professional use of social media in the professional environment. Through the incorporation of sociological research there are a wealth of leadership practices across complex fields of study that describe fundamental elements of social media integration into the leadership environment. As new leadership practices develop within the traditional workplace, the millennial generation has continued to enhance their preferred form of leadership development. This development takes place in the form of modern social media communication.

Founded on the pursuit to answer the question of modern social accessibility, this study aims to define the formal connection between leadership medium and innovative communication in the workplace. Influence is the key component of social media as the existing generation gap within the workforce continues to curb synchronized professional advancement that mirrors cultural norms. As the current social environment advances in harmony with the technology that drives it, the United States Air Force stands to gain significant synchronized communication within the ranks with the incorporation of cost-effective social media integration. Utilizing the combination of Socio-Cultural theory and Social Influence Perspective Theory with an emphasis on communication purpose, the collaboration of information flow within the Air Force has the potential to improve significantly. The wealth of potential in this communication arena has demonstrated anecdotes of priceless tactical advantage and previously impossible communication range of senior leader mentorship. By exploring the innovation of social media and its use in the United States Air Force, this qualitative research study based in grounded theory has

the potential to move beyond description to generate the discovery of a new theory on leadership design related to social media (Creswell, 2013).

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### **Introduction**

The qualitative research executed within this grounded theory study pursued the identification of specific leadership styles utilized by Air Force commanders who employ social media as an ancillary medium in their communication with subordinate Airmen assigned at their home-station organizations. Specifically, Facebook has been adapted and utilized by the United States Air Force as a recognized form of social media with immediate access to subordinates in real time. The scope of the study was executed with the vision to research, identify, and publish successful leadership anecdotes from Air Force leaders who have capitalized on the exponential scale of leadership through social media. Included in this study was the interview solicitation of eight Air Force commanders in the grade of lieutenant colonel, colonel, and brigadier general who had between 15 and 25 years of active-duty service. The evidence-based leadership model built from a combination of these leadership anecdotes and supplemental research served as the benchmark for future advancements in the collaboration of leadership and professional social media communication.

### **Method**

The research goal was to explore the innovation of social media and its use as a professional communication medium for senior leaders in the United States Air Force. The use of Facebook as a specific social medium has been adopted by the Air Force without critical thought placed on how to effectively implement leadership through Facebook successfully. Based on this assumption, the qualitative approach best suited for this study was grounded theory. Existing theories on this subject lacked the

organizational applications that continue to require further exploration as this realm of human communication expands with continued reduction in Department of Defense personnel (Creswell, 2013, p. 134). The desired outcome of the study established a grounded theory that improves existing communication practices while serving as the inspiration for future development of social media in the professional realm (Creswell, 2013, p. 133).

The major beneficial aspect of grounded theory research was the ability to aid the explanation of a theory not currently in existence (Creswell, 2013, p. 88). While a number of theories exist related to social media and the communication techniques intrinsic to it, there has been little written specifically related to military and Air Force personnel. In an environment where a single leader is charged with the supervision of personnel often spread across the globe there exists a need to further understand professional social media's use as an effective method of worldwide communication.

### **Sample Methods and Population**

This qualitative study relied on the personal interview of eight active-duty Air Force commanders as the exclusive method of data collection. Each interview consisted of semi-structured questions that served to emphasize a series of unique characteristics highlighting the success and failures of the individual leadership style utilized by each commander. Specifically, the goal was to associate these unique leadership styles with their demonstrated use of social media as a direct communication platform to the subordinates assigned within their organization. These interviews were recorded using a combination of audio and note taking to ensure the entire content of every commander's remarks were captured with absolute accuracy and confidentiality.

There were two characteristics of this sampling method used to distinguish a specific population of the command culture within the United States Air Force. First, the Air Force commander is an officer who meets regimented qualifications to serve in a legal position of authority. Each of these officers had between 15 and 25 years of active-duty service, held the rank of lieutenant colonel, colonel, or brigadier general, had earned a masters level of education, and held the delegated authority to authorize their personal interview for the purpose of academic research. It should also be noted these levels of Air Force command represent the ranks that maintain face-to-face contact with subordinates assigned within their organization.

The second characteristic of this sampling method was the global scale in which Air Force commanders are assigned. While an inherent difficulty lies in the travel costs associated with accomplishing the personal interview with each participant, an included benefit resident to the wide spread geographic location of each organization is the diverse culture and region unique to each command. This valuable data collection attribute was used to determine characteristics unique to specific mission types associated with each participating commander. While these characteristics did not serve as the primary goal of this study, their value posed a secondary attribute that enhanced the process of data analysis.

### **Data Collection Tools and Procedures**

This study was primarily based on a singular over-arching question with five secondary questions. The primary question:

1. How do Air Force commanders who successfully utilize professional social media communication define leadership?

Five supplementary data collection questions facilitated the identification of common leadership themes unique to the command climate established by each Air Force commander. These five questions included:

1. How have personal leadership developments influenced the commander's approach to professional interaction with Airmen within the organization?
2. What do commanders who utilize social media believe is the climate-perception of their professional interaction through Facebook?
3. How have the leadership styles of commanders who utilize social media been adapted to improve subordinate morale and welfare with the implementation of Facebook communication?
4. How have suggestions from subordinate Airmen improved the quality of Facebook interaction within the organization?
5. How does the leadership style used during face-to-face contact change when you communicate to subordinates through social media?

### **Data Collection**

Data collection began on November 15, 2015 and concluded on December 21, 2015. Interview candidates were solicited individually via email. Confirmation of agreement to participate and subsequent schedule of the interview was also conducted via email. Once the interview was scheduled, all future correspondence was conducted face-to-face. One exception was a brigadier general assigned overseas as an expeditionary wing commander. All correspondence with this brigadier general was conducted via email due to his geographic location and the nature of combat operations.

The first interview stage began with an explanation of the *Participant Consent Form* found at Appendix A. Every interview participant was required to sign the *Consent Form* prior to interview initiation. The lone exception was the expeditionary wing commander, who electronically signed and returned the *Participant Consent Form* along with consolidated interview responses. Interview protocol formally began with activation of a recording device found in the iPhone 6 Voice Memos application.

### **The Researcher's Role**

The role of the qualitative researcher was to explore the common leadership styles utilized by Air Force commanders who successfully employ social media within their organization. Specific to this research study, the robust growth of social media in society has created limitless potential for senior leaders to engage in personal interaction with subordinates instantaneously and with an intimate nature. The best way to characterize the lessons learned from senior Air Force leaders who have engaged in this uncharacteristic medium was through professional success and failures captured through personal anecdotes experienced during their tenure as commander. Maintaining a qualitative theme, the personal interview created the opportunity to capture the observation and inductive data analysis that simultaneously accompanied the audio recording of each interview.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

This dissertation research plan utilized a qualitative study that incorporated grounded theory design to analyze six research questions unique to the professional use of social media in the United States Air Force. The personal interview was selected as the ideal medium for this research study to create the best data collection opportunity. To

correctly gauge the personal leadership styles and anecdotes of senior Air Force leaders, the solicitation of interview candidates focused on active duty Air Force commanders. The responsibilities of officers serving in this position range from command and control of numerous operational missions assigned within their unit as well as the organization, training, and equipment of hundreds of personnel within their command. In addition, they are responsible for the health and welfare of dependent families of those servicemen and women assigned to their command. While there are 113 active duty Air Force wings spread throughout the world, the predetermined goal was to interview five percent of the command population at a single wing.

In the analysis portion of the dissertation, audio from each interview was recorded using the Voice Memos application found on the iPhone 6. Once each interview was completed, these recordings were submitted to [www.Rev.com](http://www.Rev.com) for professional transcription of the entire interview session. The ultimate goal was to decipher the most successful leadership use in the social media environment, specifically Facebook. Once a sufficient conclusion was established, a grounded theory and evidence-based leadership model was created utilizing the combination of interview data collection and existing academic work on the subject.

### **Ethical Considerations**

A consideration for sound ethics lies at the cornerstone of all research phases. From the onset of data collection to the interpretation of the results, each component was accomplished with the utmost respect to the academic institution, professors associated with the dissertation, the United States Air Force, and the Airmen that so proudly serve their country in uniform. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) was solicited to review

all phases of this study to ensure complete ethical consideration. Creighton University IRB approval was received on Wednesday, November 4, 2015. The underlying purpose of this study is to develop an improved understanding of leadership conducted through social media. Therefore, it was paramount to maintain a utilitarian approach through every phase of the study to maximize the potential leadership benefits for all those who may be impacted by these results. Specifically, two key areas of emphasis ensured ethical considerations met the high standards this dissertation was held to.

First, the utmost care was taken to maintain the confidentiality of each interview participant. While it is not anticipated the remarks of these commanders generated questionable material, frequency of high-quality leadership anecdotes was improved with the management of confidentiality. Data collection would lack a valuable component to the study without the freedom of these candid responses. To enable this protected environment, only their level of command, type of command, and region of command were utilized to identify each commander. Remaining characteristics such as rank, time in service, and size of their organization were used to quantify professional attributes of the commander rather than identify the individual. Second, it was imperative that data analysis captured the mindset of a leadership professional whose interpretation of the results did not mislead the reader or publish remarks out of context for the benefit of the study. To ensure accuracy of the data collected, each interview was recorded using an iPhone 6 voice memo application and complimented with hand-written notes. This primary and secondary method ensured the utmost accuracy of each interview conducted. A final measure that facilitated these ethical considerations was the consent form signed by each interview participant. This form was used to ensure every Air Force commander

understood the research intent of their remarks, the scope in which they were analyzed, and the availability of their interview transcript prior to its use for analysis and potential publication. The combination of these considerations created the best possible ethical environment throughout each phase of study.

### **Summary**

While the ideal method of professional communication is conducted in the form of face-to-face contact, the expansion of military missions in global operations limits the quality and frequency of this valuable form of direct personal exchange. The United States Air Force is representative of a service branch within the Department of Defense that continues to experiment with the professional use of social media as an ancillary method of communication with subordinates across the base and the globe. With limited research that identifies the ideal leadership medium behind successful professional communication through social media, the Air Force is in the midst of a gradual learning process. Through the use of grounded theory research, this study selected eight Air Force commanders as interview subjects with the ability to articulate their common leadership styles in the process of learning to incorporate Facebook into their leadership toolkit.

In conclusion, this study partially fulfills a lack of knowledge about the appropriate methods in which social media may be utilized for professional large-group leadership. There remains an urgent need to conduct a grounded theory study that expands upon the limited existing theoretical understanding about professional social media use with an ultimate intent to generate an evidence-based leadership model that effectively identifies the best methods for professional communication. As the United States Air Force remains immersed in global contingency operations, Facebook has

emerged as the communication medium of choice. Focusing this qualitative study on this specific social media application highlighted identifiable attributes unique to an explicitly defined participant population.

The commander's descriptions of responses to their professional communication strategies facilitated the creation of a grounded theory and evidence-based leadership model that identifies an ideal method for the successful use of social media in a professional environment. From this development, the future use of social media in the United States Air Force will be enhanced by the purposeful leadership styles implemented during a period of limited military force spread thin in support of global operations. Finally, the current trend of global commerce expansion will become simplified. Communication with employees and business partners will benefit from innovative technology and the Air Force leadership theory that will serve as the benchmark for future research on leadership through social media in the civilian business sector (Okoro, 2012). Together, military and civilian organizations alike will benefit from the newfound leadership theory as social media continues to mark a permanent change in the way humans communicate.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND THE EVIDENCE-BASED SOLUTION

**Introduction**

This chapter provides analysis of qualitative data collected during interviews with eight active-duty United States Air Force commanders. These data points are prefaced by an overview that defines the purpose and aim of this study. Next, a summary presentation of significant findings provides a synopsis of the results to include detailed descriptions of data analysis procedures, explanation of data organization, and the identification of approaches used to ensure quality and trustworthiness. Finally, the chapter concludes with the identification of five super-themes and associated subordinate themes that directly support the primary aim of this study. These themes will be presented in the following order:

1. Self-Identified leadership style
2. Successful leadership communication defined
3. Air Force wide social media themes
4. Cornerstone of commander's leadership style
5. Professional Facebook utilization within the organization

A closing summary highlights the two main components of this chapter. These components include a synopsis of data collection results which were recorded during a combination of eight commander interviews and a description of the evidence-based social media leadership model that served as the primary research goal explicitly described within the aim of this study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify common leadership styles utilized by Air Force commanders who successfully employ social media as an ancillary communication medium with subordinate Airmen at their home-station organizations.

### **Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study was to create an evidence-based leadership model that effectively enhanced professional social media communication between Air Force commanders, subordinate Airmen, and their families.

### **Summary and Presentation of the Findings**

A total of eight Air Force commander interviews took place between November 15, 2015 and December 21, 2015. The majority of these face-to-face interviews were conducted on an Air Force installation located within the central United States. One outlier interview was conducted exclusively via email due to the deployed commander's assigned location within a combat zone. Transcripts from each of these interviews are located at Appendix D through Appendix K. In summary, the eight commanders represented a wide demographic of age, command experience, years of active duty service, and military specialty. A consolidation of their attributes are summarized below:

- Commander age ranged from 37 to 49 years old
- Number of command tours ranged from one to four
- Years of active duty service ranged from 15 to 25
- Military specialties included pilot, navigator, communications, psychology, finance, and security forces

- All commanders were assigned to an Air Force base located in the central United States, with the exception of the expeditionary wing commander assigned to an organization located in Southwest Asia
- Every commander held a master's degree
- Six commanders were male and two were female

### **Data Collection and Instrumentation**

The data collection phase consisted of five phases. The first phase was interview solicitation, where each interview candidate was solicited individually via email. The *Participant Request Letter* found at Appendix A was included in the solicitation email to define the purpose of the study, motivation for their selection as an interview candidate, and tangible benefit of their participation. Confirmation of agreement to participate and subsequent scheduling of the interview was also conducted via email. All future correspondence was conducted face-to-face once the interview was scheduled. One outlier was a brigadier general assigned overseas as an expeditionary wing commander. All correspondence with this general was conducted via email due to the unpredictable nature of combat operations in Southwest Asia.

The second interview phase began with an explanation of the *Participant Consent Form* found at Appendix B. Every interview participant was required to sign the *Consent Form* prior to interview initiation. The lone exception was the expeditionary wing commander, who electronically signed and returned the *Participant Consent Form* along with his consolidated interview responses. Interview protocol, found at Appendix C, formally began with activation of the Voice Memos recording application found in the iPhone 6, iOS 9.2.1. With recording initiated, the first verbal exchange began with a

consolidated statement of interview intent. The statement consisted of the following message:

Thank you for participating as a critical component of this qualitative data collection. You have agreed to participate in a Creighton University dissertation study where your candid interview responses may be selected for inclusion in a final research publication. To ensure the utmost confidentiality, your personal and professional identity will be masked to the general public from this point forward. (Appendix C)

This statement served as a formal opportunity to highlight the value of commanders' participation and defined the impact their candid responses could generate to the Air Force as a whole. An opportunity was provided to solicit answers to any questions related to the research process at the conclusion of the statement. Every commander appeared to be a motivated participant and declined to ask any questions prior to the execution of the interview.

The third data collection phase was the interview. Questions utilized as interview focus points can be found at Appendix C. Each interview was conducted in the personal office of the commander being interviewed. There was only one case where an interview was disrupted by an administrative interruption. In this isolated case, the commander was notified of a subordinate's selection for promotion and chose to immediately contact the Airman to offer congratulations. A comparison of the seven interviews conducted face-to-face revealed an average interview duration of 37 minutes. The longest interview required 51 minutes to complete while the shortest lasted 25 minutes. More than half of the interviews (four) voluntarily lasted longer than the estimated 30-minute time slot

initially described during interview phase one. Saturation was achieved following the sixth commander interview. It was immediately identified once authentic responses to semi-structured interview questions yielded responses inferior in quality to data collected from previous commander interviews. Two additional interviews conducted post-saturation confirmed the inability to collect original data relevant to this qualitative study.

The fourth data collection phase focused on the transcription of each interview. First, each sound file recorded using the Voice Memos application was uploaded to the website [www.Rev.com](http://www.Rev.com). This professional service transcribed each of the seven face-to-face interviews into a Microsoft Word document. These word documents facilitated the transcripts found at Appendix D through Appendix K. A key difference between the original transcription and the versions found in each appendix was sanitization. Each transcript was scrubbed of all identifiable professional and personal information to ensure authenticity from each commander's comments could be revealed for inclusion in this grounded theory research plan. This information was judiciously eliminated without detracting from the overall content of the interview experience.

The fifth and final data collection phase consolidated transcribed data from each of the eight interviews into a qualitative data analysis program. A primary emphasis on grounded theory qualitative analysis led to the incorporation of Qualitative Solutions and Research (QSR) International's NVivo computer software package for data consolidation and enhanced analysis. NVivo software was purchased at [www.qsrinternational.com](http://www.qsrinternational.com). The ability to organize a wide range of unstructured text-based data facilitated the ability to identify five super-themes from the wealth of interview dialogue. These super-themes represent how raw dialogue data related to the original six research questions.

### **Research Questions**

This study was primarily based on a singular over-arching question with five supplementary data collection questions. The primary question:

1. How do Air Force commanders who successfully utilize professional social media communication define leadership?

Five supplementary data collection questions facilitated the identification of common leadership themes unique to the command climate established by each Air Force commander. These five questions included:

1. How have personal leadership developments influenced the commander's approach to professional interaction with Airmen within the organization?
2. What do commanders who utilize social media believe is the climate-perception of their professional interaction through Facebook?
3. How have the leadership styles of commanders who utilize social media been adapted to improve subordinate morale and welfare with the implementation of Facebook communication?
4. How have suggestions from subordinate Airmen improved the quality of Facebook interaction within the organization?
5. How does the leadership style used during face-to-face contact change when you communicate to subordinates through social media?

### **Member Checking**

Interview data was validated throughout the data collection process. A primary method of validation conducted during each face-to-face interview was member checking. Throughout Appendix D to Appendix K (transcripts), the major components of

information shared by each commander were summarized and restated by the researcher to confirm accuracy of comprehension. This opportunity to succinctly restate critical anecdotes, feelings, and experiences validated completeness of the information shared and gave credibility to the data collected (Creswell, 2013). A final invitation to review the interview content for completeness took place at the conclusion of each interview, an effort to reinforce the pursuit of accuracy in the discussion that took place. None of the seven commanders interviewed face-to-face wished to correct, add, or remove portions of their recorded dialogue. Each of them agreed to offer their comments for publication without revisiting the facts presented.

### **Data Analysis**

Analysis of the data collected began once the transcripts were returned from [www.rev.com](http://www.rev.com). The three phases of data analysis included:

1. Transcription Analysis
2. Content Analysis
3. Theme Analysis

A combination of these three phases led to the selection of five super-themes that directly influenced the identification of specific leadership styles utilized by Air Force commanders who employ social media as an ancillary communication medium within their organization. These phases laid the foundation for the creation of an evidence-based leadership model.

### **Transcription Analysis**

Analysis of each transcript was the first critical component to the identification and construction of an evidence-based leadership model. Due to the unique nature of

military acronyms and jargon, each transcript required thorough examination to correct transcription error and enhance overall data comprehension. Additionally, it was imperative that each transcript was available to the general public for reference as a focal point of the dissertation. Therefore, substantial data related to identifiable people, organizations, and locations were eliminated from the text provided. The examination of content and subsequent elimination of identifiable attributes provided the ideal data source for thorough content analysis.

### **Content Analysis**

Initial super-theme development began through correlation of the six research questions with the corresponding answers provided by each commander. As the five themes took shape, rough draft transcripts were highlighted to identify verbal exchanges that related to individual leadership models. These content analysis efforts resulted in highlighted color-coded data that enabled instant identification of specific themes revealed throughout the entire collection of dialogue compiled from the eight interviews. A collaboration of these specific themes led to the identification of five super-themes. Each super-theme was assigned a unique color. One final transcript review categorized identifiable data points with the color that corresponded to one of the five super-themes. This organized pool of data points eased the transition to the final analysis phase, theme analysis.

### **Theme Analysis**

This last phase in data analysis incorporated QSR International's NVivo computer software package for data consolidation and enhanced analysis. Each sanitized transcript was uploaded to NVivo as an internal source for the purpose of digital coding and theme

analysis. Next, five nodes were created that corresponded with the five super-themes identified throughout the content analysis phase. These super-themes included:

1. Self-Identified leadership style
2. Successful leadership communication defined
3. Air Force wide social media themes
4. Cornerstone of commander's leadership style
5. Professional Facebook utilization within the organization

Finally, every color-coded data point was applied to one of NVivo's five super-theme nodes. This consolidation of thematic data points was the foundation of the organizational design necessary for enhanced qualitative analysis. It was through this three-phased data analysis system that five super-themes were positively identified and itemized using NVivo software. The next stage in the development of an evidence-based leadership model was to ascertain how the raw data that comprised each super-theme related to the aforementioned six research questions.

### **Analysis of Findings**

Analysis of the five super-themes provided fundamental insight into the leadership aptitude comprehended and demonstrated by the eight participant Air Force commanders. Interestingly, the utilization of social media was not consistent amongst the commanders. There was not an identifiable correlation between leaders of similar age, command experience, active duty service, or military specialty. Each commander's implementation of social media within their units was influenced by two criteria: identification with a specific leadership style and a natural aptitude to reveal their authentic self. One squadron commander confidently revealed, "I don't do anything with

a hidden agenda on my personal Facebook page. It is about me, my kids, and my family.” This authentic sense of self translated to a similarly authentic leadership style with strong resonance throughout the organization. Alternatively, another squadron commander exhibited a personal preference for traditional leadership communication, “I think my favorite way [to communicate] is just talking to somebody versus using any type of electronic method.” While each commander identified with an authentic leadership style comprised of apparent sincerity, the singular difference in social media aptitude was isolated to the difference between the communication and revelation of the authentic self. Herein lies the aim of this qualitative study, to create an evidence-based leadership model that effectively enhances professional social media communication between Air Force commanders and subordinate Airmen assigned within their organization.

### **Super-Theme #1: Self-Identified Leadership Style**

There were three leadership styles common to the eight Air Force commanders who volunteered to participate in the interviews: transformational, participative, and authentic. Five of the commanders identified with an authentic leadership style, while others viewed transformational leadership as a subcomponent to the foundation for their interest in communication expansion via Facebook. The expeditionary wing commander described this preference for constant transformation as, “I strongly believe in and talk frequently about collaborating, connecting, and communicating (3 Cs) at all levels inside and outside of an organization...and doing so frequently.” A squadron commander summarized this thirst for effective communication by stating, “at the end of the day we are in the people business.” It was this declaration of mission-focused people-oriented

communication that defined the intrinsic motivation to expand professional communication to social media applications.

Airmen need to understand their leader as a person before they are able to develop an authentic commitment to a commander's mission, vision, and goals. Authenticity is a two-way street. A squadron commander explained:

For me, personally, one of the biggest things, and I think this is important, you need to put yourself out there and let your Airmen know who you are. That's not who you think that you should be, but who you actually are. Window dressing doesn't work. Airmen see right through it.

This declarative revelation ties into a statement summarized by the researcher during an interview response to another squadron commander, to which they agreed:

Some might say that that's an example of authentic leadership, where you may be in a position of command, but you want to always maintain the person that you are and convey that to everyone in your organization so they look at you as a commander first, but a human being always. They must be able to talk to you as a human being with the respect of the position that you hold.

Therefore, the particular leadership style an Air Force commander personally identifies with is not of particular importance. They must maintain the freedom to select the specific leadership style that encompasses their strengths. Notably, the assimilation of a personal leadership model with authentic attributes must communicate transparent sincerity. The wing commander described the purpose behind these actions, "it shows that we are transparent, approachable, and human." The particular leadership style

embodied by a commander is not as important as the authentic method the selected style is communicated to subordinates and their families.

### **Super-Theme #2: Successful Leadership Communication Defined**

This particular super-theme relates exclusively to the singular over-arching research question, “How do Air Force commanders who successfully utilize professional social media communication define leadership?” It was arguably the most important aspect of the analysis phase as it produced consistent definitions of leadership complimented by tangible professional anecdotes. Quite simply, the wing commander articulated that successful leadership communication must be, “Transparent, Timely, and Truthful! Tell them what you know and when you know it. Don’t lie.” These attributes corresponded to the success of authenticity described in the aforementioned first super-theme. A second, slightly more philosophical answer came from a squadron commander who also relied on demonstrated authentic leadership. He used the following anecdote to describe the value of subordinates, “To believe. Whether or not you are successful is: are their actions showing that they believe, that they buy in, that they hear what you are saying, and they believe you, and they trust you.” This same commander described an anecdote of successful leadership communication shared exclusively through Facebook:

When someone has a baby in this unit, we do something, frankly, actually there is a picture on here I will show you. I didn't think it was that big of a deal, to be honest with you. I wondered if we should even continue doing this, because there are a lot of babies in the squadron. I mean it is a big squadron, a lot of babies. Young squadron. A lot of first time babies. We do this little bundle, with this little onesie with a [mascot] package wrapped in this little diaper bundle. I mean

it is really cute. Looks like something you would see on Pinterest. Part of me, in the back of my mind was like, is this worth continuing? There are so many things going on in the world and in this squadron. Is this worth the limited time we have? Then I just happened, literally, and I never told the kid this, and I don't know if he realizes it, because he is also friends with me [on Facebook], but I saw something from a young [Airman] in our squadron. Let's see if I can find him, hope I am not lying to you [scrolls through Facebook newsfeed]. This is a young [Airman] and his wife in our squadron who I am a personal friend with here. I mean not that I hang out with him, or anything like that, but personal friends with on Facebook. Then I saw something one day. Then I realized, because I am not that smart to start with, that the importance and the value of Facebook, or social media in general, in terms of getting feedback sometimes that you might not have gotten, or might not have valued until you saw it in a way where you realized he wasn't saying it just because I am there. Half of these people don't even realize that they are friends with me, which many times I can kind of see when somebody is maybe not having a good point in life. Jump in, and help. If you start with that honesty, it is the only way to do it. I saw this; I never let him know I saw that [shows Facebook post from linguist in squadron]. It says, "It is the little things sometimes, thankful for some caring leadership," and it is a picture of the onesie, and the diaper bag with the squadron's logo on it.

This anecdote demonstrates the tangible success leadership communication can positively influence within an organization. Herein lies the compound question, what is the definition of success in the arena of leadership? The communication squadron

commander offered the following response, “As far as successful, if your desired action or outcome is achieved through the communication which you are having, then you have achieved it.” This identifies the focal point of successful communication as dependent upon the authentic message the commander wishes to convey. Leadership has the ability to ignite the heart and soul of the subordinate and give their mission purpose. Perhaps the successful leader communicates their underlying intentions through the composure of their communication. The anecdotal example exemplified through Facebook suggests commitment to an organizational mission can be accomplished through authentic acts of leadership. Simply put, the foundation of successful leadership communication is demonstrated authenticity.

### **Super-Theme #3: Air Force Wide Social Media Themes**

Three of the eight participant commanders viewed a shared Facebook connection between Air Force leaders and their subordinates as a slippery slope of transparent communication. Too little interaction curbed the potential for enhanced mission effectiveness. Alternately, too much interaction tested the professional boundary commensurate with their position of command. One commander summarized the value of risk versus reward with a purposeful eye toward the high potential for integrated social media inspired organizational feedback. “You can do it [sic] very nuanced way where you are not sparking controversy and causing chaos. It's got to be authentic.” A similar message with an expanded emphasis on the positive impact of commander influenced authenticity serves to negate the aforementioned boundary-breaking risks.

I think it's got to go back to culture. I think that right there is that tough nut. If we can instill the right social media culture to where it does not become an

anonymous electronic means to blast somebody and air a grievance just to air it. I think if it's done responsibly and done with the intent of providing appropriate, applicable, useful feedback, that's the way we do it. I think cracking the nut is going to be in the culture piece and the responsible aspect of it. That starts right here. That starts with the commanders. That starts with us, ensuring we reinforce that by giving the opportunity and if somebody fails at it, okay lets reinforce that, lets use it as a teaching moment, so long as it does not broach the criminal. Allow people to grow from it and learn from it, and that's a hard thing for people to do. It's a hard thing to allow people to share those things, without feeling like they are going to get crushed for having an opinion.

The lesson learned during this exchange dealt with the commander centric responsibility to educate their subordinates through authentic leadership and inspired communication.

A negative aspect associated with excessive social media interaction identified a fear of retribution associated with those individuals driven by personal gain (i.e. career advancement). "There are a lot of other [sic] great leaders, but you watch and see a lot of people be put in a position of power, and all of a sudden they have no opinion about anything. What does that do for you? How does that inspire somebody?" In some cases, Air Force leaders acknowledge their hesitation to engage in the professional use of social media within their organizations. "I still run into commanders who are afraid of [using] social media. They are usually concerned about OPSEC (Operational Security), confrontation, and negative Nancy's. They do not believe there is value in this form of communication." This anecdote shared by the expeditionary wing commander gave testament to two critical components related to the fear of social media retribution. The

first is specific to commanders caught in the generation gap between the Industrial Age and Information Age described by Gherman (2010). The concerted effort required to bridge this gap leaves commanders' comfortable with the ideology of status queue communication behind. Other risk-averse non-participants appear to cherish the vector of their career rather than invest in their organization with social media infused communication. Despite perceived professional success, the actions of commanders who exhibit a purposeful lack of social media integration do not go unnoticed by their subordinates. "It is like they are so scared to say or do anything that they almost lose their sense of soul, and identity, and they have no authenticity. Right?" It is the leaders' commitment to identify their command-oriented opinions, professionally communicate those opinions throughout their organization, to lead from the front and empower subordinates to reflect on their own professionally oriented opinions that allow organizations to utilize social media professionally and effectively. Risk associated with transparent authenticity is substantially reduced through commander driven communication education. The expeditionary wing commander summarized reward over risk with,

I believe there is tremendous value in this two-way communication. By empowering participants and encouraging participation from the target audience, not only do we receive immediate feedback on the effectiveness of our communication, but it also necessitates us to be more refined in how and what we communicate.

In a society dominated by social media inspired instant flow of information, Air Force commanders have clearly gained the ability to successfully lead subordinates through an

Information Age commensurate with rapid technological expansion resident to the Industrial Age (Gherman, 2010). This ability begins with the responsibility to educate subordinates via demonstrated authentic transparent communication.

#### **Super-Theme #4: Cornerstone of Commander's Leadership Style**

A query into the cornerstone of each commander's leadership style helped to discover two individual characteristics that inspired leaders to engage in social media communication. One squadron commander revealed the principle question that guided a reflection on his own leadership ideology. He asked himself, "How do you define the fine line?" This fine line described the division between, "some say you either get fired, or you don't." The harsh reality that resulted from his reflection revealed an impenetrable emphasis on his family, acknowledged as the core of his existence. This family-focused mentality provided palpable freedom in his exploration of a multitude of innovative leadership practices, one of which included Facebook. Once he identified this cornerstone of his leadership style, the squadron commander extended the same emphasis within his organization. He recognized this attribute as a key component to a healthy organization and a component of successful communication.

Back to the family piece, you are not going to win that side unless you know your people first. Because those people are going home saying, "Hey, my commander cares about me." Outside of just the work discussion everyday, "Hey, my commander knows, and my commander cares about me." The families at home build an idea, who the commander is, and how they are doing before you even meet them.

This breakthrough identified the first individual characteristic conducive to authentic transparency demonstrated by leaders who successfully engaged in professional social media communication.

A second characteristic extended beyond the confined scope of social media within a single organization. Interestingly, a 44 year-old group commander identified it during his third command tour. He described a preference for an approachable leadership style that has helped foster an expanded network of social media connections worldwide. Many of these connections exist across multiple social media domains. In fact, this professional network serves as a litmus test for how approachable a leader is perceived by a community of former colleagues and subordinates.

I am active on LinkedIn, I am active on personal Facebook all the time, and I have many folks who I have worked with over the last ten years who are still active on my Facebook page. Half of my squadron from [Europe] is on my Facebook page, and my spouse, my wife, keeps in touch with almost all the spouses from [Europe] like you wouldn't believe. I can tell you every A1C (Airman First Class) who's now a tech sergeant. Therefore I think, although it's a personal Facebook page, the professional development of that, of the folks that reach out to you, it's like, hey sir, can I call you sometime about a look at our assignments, or what do you think is the next best thing for me? I'd like you to write a recommendation for me? That gives people the approach-ability to reach you, even when they don't work for you in your current command, or they want to catch you in a less supervision change of command and ask if they can reach out to you from a personal perspective.

The impact superior to the maintenance of professional relationships through an approachable leadership style is the group commander's ability to discover leadership value within a well-established social media network. Discovery of established professional contacts co-located with a permanent change of station (PCS) or new assignment help to ease the transition to a new position and build credibility through the validation of past performance.

Then you look at the [sic], who are they connected to, and you're like oh, now I feel that we shared a common connections with ... It was at my Joint Staff J6 position, so that's it, that was one of the contractors I worked with in Joint Staff for running the in IT1's in the Navy that I worked with. All of a sudden people who I would have typically may have forgotten, I have just not worked with them closely. Because I see their professional connections, and now it helps me associate it back to okay got it, yeah that's one of those folks in that ... That's what we have in common, is XYZ. I think that really helps, even on Facebook.

Prior to the incorporation of social media in the professional environment, the development and maintenance of such a network required unrealistic effort to sustain. Instead, the group commander described a network that nurtured itself through Facebook and LinkedIn communication.

A final anecdote from this second characteristic tied the value of a global social medial network to a direct impact on successful communication within his command. Critical attributes to this connection were the transparent display of normal day-to-day activities on Facebook and subordinate perception of authentic interactions with a credible professional social media network.

The perception, I think it makes people realize that you are human. You're not some unique person who puts your pants on any differently, or should be treated any differently. There's no rank in a personal Facebook, and so you're just [interviewee], you're not a colonel [interviewee]; you're not a group commander. You're just a guy who watches soccer practice, walks your dog, has dinner, takes pictures in front of Christmas lights with your kids, and sends out Christmas cards. You're just normal, and I think it's you that makes you approachable, and they realize, oh this guys just like me. I felt more comfortable asking these simple questions, or coming to his office and saying, "He seems liked a pretty good guy from Facebook, so maybe I can come and talk to him and say hey, I'm having a problem in the squadron, I'm having an issue with my supervisor." I felt uncomfortable jumping the chain of commands, I didn't really know, but you seem pretty normal, let me just ask you what you think. I think it opens up some opportunities that people might not have felt comfortable with before.

This expansion of an approachable leadership style would not be possible without the dawn of an Information Age and the expansion of social media into the professional environment (Gherman, 2010). The opportunity provided to leaders who disregard the professional risks associated with Facebook and focus on its advanced capability to directly influence organizational communication within an Air Force unit is remarkable. The next super-theme will highlight specific anecdotes within these units that convey powerful change theory.

**Super-Theme #5: Professional Facebook Utilization Within the Organization**

Concrete examples of social media implementation within an organization provided tangible correlations to material described in the first four super-themes. The eight commanders shared anecdotes with characteristics aligned within three distinct categories. These categories focused on aspects related to Airman recognition, family, and community. The expeditionary wing commander best described the first category, Airman recognition, during implementation within his expeditionary wing overseas.

Based on the above story, I redoubled my 3 C efforts (collaborating, connecting and communicating). Which led me to find a way to use social media. My PA (Public Affairs) shop helped me establish a Facebook site and we discussed purpose and most effective use of this medium. I used Facebook for most of my two years as a Wing Commander at [my previous assignment] and the entire seven months here at [my current command assignment]. It's important to note that I prioritized social media interactions differently depending on location. That is... [In Europe], I focused on Airman recognition and information sharing involving the entire spectrum of Airmen and the Community at a base in the countryside of [Europe] (Audience: Airmen and families at [base in Europe]). We captured Airmen at work, quarterly award winners, events (on and off base), and upcoming activities (on and off base). We also held live social media events for all to participate in, extremely successful and useful. At [the expeditionary wing] I focus mainly on Airman recognition and their impact on the mission and avoid info sharing (Audience: Airmen's home station families and friends). Less

impactful overall, but a valuable way to showcase what our Airmen do in a combat zone.

The social media interactions utilized by the wing commander within his expeditionary wing continue to achieve their intent. In the latest Facebook post, public affairs produced a video whose story highlights phase aircraft maintenance for a fighter jet and has been viewed more than 70,000 times. The next post down the list had been viewed more than two thousand times. The next, more than 14,000 views. Each post “talks about the importance of what they do. Maybe he turned wrenches and maybe he did something else. I think that's a pretty powerful way to kind of not only instill pride, but also to share our mission.” While this is the general’s third command and second at the wing level, he tactfully demonstrates that Facebook interactions can be conducted professionally, without risk of negligence, and with far-reaching communication power to instantly reach stateside friends and families of deployed members. Their communication theme remains constant, focused on being transparent, timely, and truthful.

I believe the perception is my command chief and I [are] transparent, approachable, and human. We are real people, sincere, and care about our Airmen. Because of the transparent, approachable, and human interaction, I believe it made the Airmen (and their families, we’ve had many spouses chat us up in the Base Exchange) more comfortable in approaching the command chief and I on and off duty. They weren’t and are not scared to ask questions or suggest improvements to the base or bring up challenges in their work centers.

In one month, one commander has personally reached more than 100,000 members of the Air Force family.

This emphasis on family was the second category of anecdotes provided by the eight commanders. As one squadron commander explained,

I would absolutely say that the communication with the greater family is just as vital as the communication with the Airmen. Because, particularly in a career field we've got, I think the aggregate age or mean average age in this unit is 23.4 years old, or something like that. With less than 5 years of service. Across from my chief, who's got 28, to the brand new Airmen that come straight out of tech school. You average that out, that's a young organization.

Communication between a commander and the family members of their subordinate Airmen is not confined to information distribution. "My Airmen will tell you, that we want to see the Commander more. No matter how much I show up, they will always give the feedback, "We want to see the Commander more. We want to ask them questions." In fact, one squadron commander makes the effort to extend social media education and awareness to family members.

As part of that, we educate the spouses on some of the social media responsibilities and kind of a safe guard them with the privacy stuff. Once a quarter, she'll scrub it, based on who has PCS'd (Permanent Change of Station), and if they are no longer associated with the unit, then they get off the list, because, again it goes to the anti-terrorism enforced protection pieces of it. And we educate all spouses as they come into this unit, "Hey, welcome to the page, here are some of the things that you know, here are kind of some of the standing rules," and this kind of thing, which has turned out to be a pretty positive thing.

Though informal, this rather straightforward spouse-oriented lesson imparts upon Airmen that every single member of their family is a critical component to the squadron's mission success. In light of the informal nature of this communication medium, Facebook provides valuable feedback to commanders. One squadron commander recognized this attribute and valued the feedback obtained from this medium.

I realized, because I am not [sic] that smart to start with, that the importance and the value of Facebook, or social media in general, in terms of getting feedback sometimes that you might not have gotten, or might not have valued until you saw it in a way where you realized he wasn't saying it just because I am there.

Direct contact with the commander is infrequent in most Air Force squadrons, especially for spouses and their children. One squadron commander addressed the challenge of regular engagement through transparent anecdotes posted on her personal Pinterest board. "As far as leadership and interacting with my troops and social media, I do have a Facebook site. I do have a LinkedIn site. I have something else that is surprisingly more effective than both of those. That's Pinterest." The result created a valuable method for personal contact available to Airmen and their families where they could engage with their commander's interests on a personal level beyond regular duty hours. As described, her efforts were both authentic and transparent.

Here's how Pinterest is important. I pin books I'm reading. I pin workouts I'm doing. I pin gear that I'm using for my workouts. I pin food service. I use a couple of food services around town, like [local restaurant]. I pin things that they might want to try or whatever on this Pinterest site. It's interesting, because they can go look at that without me knowing they're looking at my stuff.

An interesting component of this family driven characteristic is the reality as one squadron commander described, “We also have a young population, so not everybody has a spouse.” The accepted solution to balance this social dynamic was to emphasize a third characteristic within professional social media communication, the community.

The medical group commander defined the challenge of community oriented social media as, “I think you can use it to reach larger groups and get a message out, but I think it has to somehow appeal to them.” A simple emphasis on consistency ensures information distribution is regularly conducted via the same medium. The operations support squadron commander relayed his recommended solution for successful community communication. “I think that would be the one thing I would fix. If there's a way to standardize it and consolidate it, and maybe have it come down a specific way.” The colonel demonstrated a synonymous specific method within her own organization. She explained, “We use Facebook at the Med Group. Our Facebook page is mainly to get information out to beneficiaries: closures, health information, more general information.” Similarly, the wing commander described how Facebook became the focal point for information dissemination within the greater installation community.

In some overseas locations, social media has become the primary way of providing real-time information to active-duty, civilians, and family members. At [previous wing command assignment], our Public Affairs [team] regularly posted updated road conditions, school closures, and other frequently changing but important information on their Facebook page (along with the standard Public Affairs products). Once the community caught on and they added the page to their favorites, we also gained the benefit of viewing the rest of the information

we wanted them to see. Similar story, my current Public Affairs officer, who was stationed at [Asia], stated that their Facebook page served as the sole real-time information source for emergency information for the 50,000 American citizens on the island of [Asia]. This became valuable during the island's several typhoons each year, for which the wing commander was the authority on declaring conditions that affected every AMCIT (American Citizen) on the island.

A defined method for community-oriented information helped to unite a large organization comprised with extensive variety in age, family structure, and rank. The result was a well-orchestrated commander communication method.

### **Synthesis of Grounded Theory**

The five super-themes identified articulate methods of professional social media communication regularly executed by commanders within their organization and mission-related community. Each of the eight commanders demonstrated a communication niche tailored to the mission, social dynamic, and tempo of their unit. Commander communication methods were similar when compared amongst those with self-identified successful social media correspondence. All eight commanders emphasized face-to-face interaction with subordinates as the most effective form of communication. "Things for the actual mission or things are actually important, really important to actually do, I will do face-to-face. My Airmen like to see people face-to-face." Limitations related to time and geographic separation encouraged seven commanders to enhance face-to-face communication with complimentary methods. The lone commander with exclusive face-to-face communication led a squadron of 25 collocated Airmen, an assignment where walking around was more feasible. Examples

of these complimentary methods included Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, email, and hand-signed letters. Amongst this list of secondary methods, the security forces squadron commander summarized the overarching priority on which every commander should focus their attention, personal contact.

Fast forward to the social media aspect, and I think the biggest lesson learned in the spring of 2011, my second squadron command opportunity, I had a young troop that committed suicide while deployed. When the notification came through, it came through to the command post, and the way the command post was set up, there was a curtain between the command post and the emergency communication center, so fire and security forces dispatch. Because it was such a small working environment, my cops heard the call come in, and they were like "Oh my gosh." Being able to get on the front end of that and talk to my guys, and say, "Listen, we need to be careful with the social media aspect." Because low and behold, all the inquiries started coming in.

This powerful example of reigning in the connectivity of social media to curb premature notification of next-of-kin allowed the commander to properly funnel communication. He explained, "Being able to guide people to resources, let them know that as we have updates, we'll share what we can, and then following up on that. I think there was a big positive lesson out of that too." Social media, particularly Facebook, has the power to simultaneously help and harm an organization. A commitment to educate subordinates combined with the delegated authority to proctor their own social media posts enabled an entire squadron to grow professionally.

I mean, if I can trust an 18, 19, or 20 year old with automatic weapons to keep what's out on that flight line, here at [our installation], safe because I've given them the empowerment and the authority to act in a legal, ethical manor, why would I not trust them to be an adult and do the things on social media where that's their generation? So is it the fact that we shouldn't fit into their generation, or their generation needs to fit into us. I would say we need to adapt to the times, because the times will overtake us. We will be OBE (Overcome by Events). I think that's the perspective I took.

Similarly, communication with the older generation must be managed intelligently as well. In one case, the squadron commander postmarked a hand-signed letter sent to the parents of every new Airman assigned to his squadron.

Any brand new Airman, straight out of tech school, I do a hand-signed letter, and send it to their parents. And say, "Look, they were received here, all is well, here is my direct line, and my e-mail address. If you need anything please contact me."

The communicated reality was that Facebook had become the accepted compliment to face-to-face communication because an entire generation of Airmen had changed how we communicate in society. On the contrary, dated methods of communication (i.e. letters and email) remain valid mediums when tailored to a specific audience that prefers them. Herein lies the aim of the study and grassroots evidence-based leadership model for successful social media communication in the professional environment: awareness of the audience, knowledge of execution, and authentic communication of transparent material.

### **Summary**

Two distinct components within Chapter Four included a description of the findings and an evidence-based solution. The researcher discovered all findings presented throughout this chapter. Presentation of the findings was consolidated into five super-themes designed exclusively by the researcher. These super-themes included Self-Identified Leadership Style, Successful Leadership Communication Defined, Air Force Wide Social Media Themes, Cornerstone of Commander's Leadership Style, and Professional Facebook Utilization within the Organization. The eight Air Force commanders who participated in this grounded theory research study discussed the precise leadership characteristics required to construct an evidence-based leadership model. The researcher created this model to effectively satisfy the aim of this study.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Introduction**

This study defined the requirement to utilize qualitative data analysis to create a grounded theory and evidence-based leadership model that enhanced professional implementation of social media communication within the United States Air Force. All conclusions in this chapter are summarized from data collected throughout the research plan, comprehensive literary review, and synthesis of findings from the study. The implications of the study, recommendations for action, and recommendations for further research will be addressed to define this study's contribution to the body of leadership knowledge within the United States Air Force. Personal reflection from the researcher will articulate leadership growth achieved during dissertation coursework and projected application of that growth accompanied by the grounded theory developed. This combination of professional and personal growth will facilitate the continuity of effort required to ensure successful leadership model implementation and application to future research on this subject. Validation of this leadership model through Air Force professional and academic channels complimented by articulate description of the methods intrinsic to its design are requirements for an effective conclusion to this research study.

### **Overview of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify specific leadership styles utilized by Air Force commanders who employ social media as an ancillary communication medium with subordinate Airmen assigned within their home-station organizations. A qualitative research plan facilitated a grounded theory through semi-

structured face-to-face interviews with eight active-duty Air Force commanders that gauged communication effectiveness of their individual leadership styles. Each commander represented a wide range in age, command experience, years of active duty service, and military specialty to validate implementation of the grounded theory by a commander of any demographic. Each sound file submitted to [www.Rev.com](http://www.Rev.com) for professional transcription underwent meticulous removal of all identifiable professional and personal information. This method of grounded theory research encouraged candid interview dialogue through protection of each commander's identity. All data was judiciously eliminated without detracting from the overall content of the interview.

A primary emphasis on grounded theory qualitative analysis led to the incorporation of Qualitative Solutions and Research (QSR) International's NVivo computer software package for data consolidation and enhanced analysis. The software's ability to organize a wide range of unstructured text-based data facilitated the identification of successful leadership themes resident to the social media leadership ideology for military leaders within the Air Force. Analysis of these findings expanded upon leadership-based revelations from each commander to identify five super-themes from the wealth of interview dialogue. These super-themes represent how raw dialogue data related to the original six research questions.

The five super-themes identified from the compilation of interview data directly supported the aim of this study. Synthesis of these findings facilitated the construction of a leadership model that identified an evidence-based leadership solution for the effective implementation of professional social media communication between Air Force commanders and subordinate Airmen, their families, and external community.

### **Purpose of the Study**

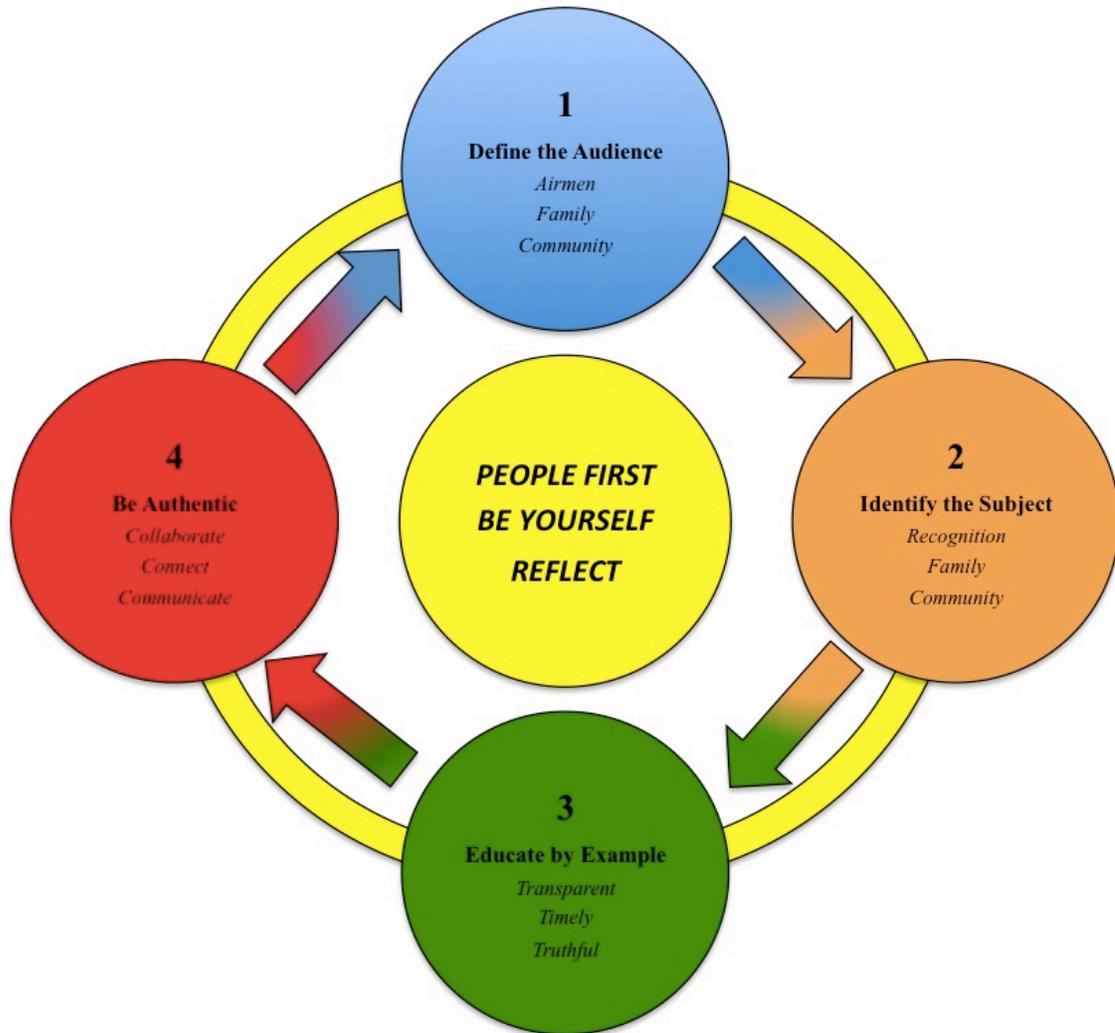
The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify common leadership styles utilized by Air Force commanders who successfully employ social media as an ancillary communication medium with subordinate Airmen at their home-station organizations.

### **Aim of the Study**

The aim of this study was to create an evidence-based leadership model that effectively enhanced professional social media communication between Air Force commanders, subordinate Airmen, and their families.

### **Proposed Evidence-Based Leadership Model**

The aim of this study called for the creation of an evidence-based leadership model that effectively enhanced professional social media communication between Air Force commanders, subordinate Airmen, and their families. Analysis of data collected yielded the precise characteristics required to construct this evidence-based leadership model. These characteristics were specifically sourced from leadership and social media communication attributes presented from each of the five super-themes. Data compiled from these super-themes highlighted superior social media communication methods, elements of authentic leadership, and commander driven revelation of the transparent self. The five super-themes combined to form a four-phased leadership model with a fifth phase integrated throughout the social media communication cycle. A depiction of the evidence-based leadership model can be found at Figure 1.



*Figure 1.* Evidence-Based Leadership Model. This figure illustrates how to effectively enhance professional social media communication between Air Force commanders, subordinate Airmen, and their families.

### **Existing Support Structure and Resources**

Creation of an evidence-based solution to the aim of this study satisfies the requirement to generate grounded theory research that correlates professional social media with successful communication within a large organization to identify the ideal leadership style in which leadership through social media may be successfully implemented. The support and resources required to facilitate implementation of this leadership communication model exist within the United States Air Force. Three primary

methods for dissemination of the model include local commander driven mentorship, researcher authored publications, and the solicitation of Air University. It is important to note incorporation of this evidence-based leadership model will not be a mandatory addition to Air Force leadership practices. Officers selected for commander should be provided the opportunity to pursue their own leadership pathway that suits their personal leadership style, mission, vision, and goals.

A commander driven mentorship program related to professional social media organizational integration describes a grassroots method that will ensure articulate explanation of the leadership model supported by commander-demonstrated examples. The most efficient approach toward first-contact with commanders is a researcher-led presentation in an installation-wide leadership seminar. These seminars are historically held no more than two times per calendar year.

The opportunity to circulate a researcher-authored publication within an Air Force installation will heighten the rate of dissemination at the risk of decreased model articulation. This method will prove most effective in two professional environments, post-leadership seminar and a geographically separated installation. Each example serves to supplement the primary installation-wide leadership seminar previously described.

Solicitation of Air University would require sponsorship of the topic by an academic official within the university system. This university, located at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama as a component of the Air Education and Training Command, serves as the Air Force's primary center for professional military education. A benefit to topic sponsorship by this accredited academic institution would be the realistic potential of subject matter incorporation into the professional military education curriculum. The

single graphic evidence-based leadership model supported by five super-themes presents a condensed structure that should feasibly compliment a core curriculum designed for enlisted Airmen, officers, and commanders alike.

### **Change Theory**

Change is a constant within every organization. Air Force commanders must continue to build an organization adaptive to change to meet the demands of an external environment more dynamic than ever before (Burke, 2011). Gherman (2010) described the military transition from the Industrial Age to the Information Age as an example of this dynamic external environment. The leadership challenge to decisively integrate an organization to meet this thrust of change forces commanders to reexamine the demonstrated effectiveness of current communication practices. The fixture of social media in society has permanently enhanced access to real-time information and necessitated that senior military leaders rethink how intelligence is organized, managed, and controlled (Gherman, 2012).

One tangible influence of social media infused culture on real-time access to information is the necessity for Air Force leaders to adapt their communication practices to capitalize on a technological advancement available to Airmen at limited cost. This sociotechnical linkage between the Air Force and external society defines the need to account for the broader context of organizational change within the service (Burke, 2011). Specifically, the implementation of an evidence-based leadership model that effectively enhances professional social media communication between Air Force commanders and subordinate Airmen, their families, and community.

### **Implementation of Solution Processes and Considerations**

Implementation of the evidence-based leadership model may be achieved through selection from three available methods. These primary methods for dissemination of the model include local commander driven mentorship, researcher authored publications, and the solicitation of Air University. Any combination of the aforementioned methods will achieve model validation and further amplify the successful implementation across the Air Force. Two considerations that must be accounted for include senior leadership initiative support and Air University allocated curriculum availability. Opportunities for researcher-authored publications remain prevalent amongst Air Force, Department of Defense, and academic journals. Selected methods such as a weekly installation publication are readily available. Alternately, Air Force published quarterly leadership journals offer wider circulation amongst installations located around the globe.

The determination of saturation or articulation as the preferred dissemination strategy exists as the single consideration associated with the selection of the publication method. A saturation strategy involves the selection of a publication source with a large community reader base. Alternately, the articulation strategy selects a refined publication source specific to one group, such as an Air Force installation. Professional integration with key players associated with each dissemination method will be a critical component to evidence-based leadership model validation.

### **Leader's Role in Implementing Proposed Solution**

The leader serves a paramount role in the implementation of the evidence-based leadership model. Specific to social media based communication, the leadership role defines any user who successfully engages in professional social media correspondence.

While the original intent of the graphic referenced in Figure 1 serves Air Force commanders, the audience may be extended to any professional with the desire to integrate Facebook as a component of their communication catalogue. In this sense the leadership role in the implementation phase will include every professional who selects the model and chooses to effectively implement the described social media communication ideology.

### **Proposed Solution**

The advent of social media has ignited a permanent sociological transition in the realm of modern day communication. Modern culture has confronted a seismic shift in the human behavior that governs day-to-day human social interactions. As a result, research scientists have struggled to keep pace with the rapid progression of social media technology that appears so easily digested by the millennial generation. This phenomenon has gone global as well. Theories that govern human communication sociology continue to evolve as modern communication technology delivers enhanced social media applications to worldwide users. A significant component of human communication has been influenced by the evolution of social media applications, specifically Facebook. Herein lies the significant application of the evidence-based leadership model that serves as the solution to the aim of this study.

The aim of this study called for the creation of an evidence-based leadership model that effectively enhanced professional social media communication between Air Force commanders, subordinate Airmen, and their families. Analysis of data collected yielded precise characteristics that led to the practical design of the evidence-based leadership model at Figure 1. Characteristics specifically sourced from leadership and

social media communication attributes resulted in the identification of five super-themes that combine to highlight the significance of superior social media communication methods, elements of authentic leadership, and commander driven revelation of the transparent self. The attributes identified by these five super-themes help to form the critical components of leadership growth, professional development, and mission effectiveness within the Air Force, a professional organizations that employ subordinates around the globe.

Identification of an ideal leadership style that could be adopted by commanders to enhance success of their social media communication required the correlation of these attributes into an easy-to-comprehend leadership model. While Facebook provides an excellent Air Force communication tool, the evidence-based solution to this study filled the absence of theoretical analysis that defines the ideal method in which professional social media correspondence should be initiated and sustained. The five super-themes combined to form the four-phased leadership model with a fifth phase integrated throughout the social media communication cycle that meets these requirements. Specifically, the requirement to generate grounded theory research that correlates professional social media with successful communication within a large organization and identifies the ideal leadership style in which communication through social media will be successfully implemented. The results of this study effectively fill a knowledge gap generated by a technology that has changed the way people communicate around the world. From this development, the future use of social media in the United States Air Force will be enhanced by the purposeful leadership models implemented by commanders during a period of limited military force spread thin in support of global

operations. Implementation of this leadership model should serve as a communication enhanced force multiplier for Airmen assigned both in garrison and abroad.

### **Support for the Solution from Data Collected**

There are five components to the evidence-based leadership model found at Figure 1. First there is the foundation of the model located at the twelve 'o'clock position, phase one (blue). This first phase inspires commanders to define the primary audience whom they wish to receive the message of their social media post. The fifth super-theme, Professional Facebook Utilization within the Organization, described a community of Airmen and their families who combine to yield the target audience for Air Force centric social media publications. A professional social media post that originates from the hand of an Air Force commander should not target any other audience.

The second (orange) phase of the evidence-based leadership model serves to define the subject matter. Again, the fifth super-theme referenced data collected from the expeditionary wing commander. The general regularly published Facebook posts that yielded more than 70,000 views by limiting Facebook posts to the following subjects: Airmen recognition, family, and community. Similarity between subcomponents of phase one and two should be recognized, as continuity between the subject and intended audience defines successful social media communication. The foundation of social media is the communication of information related to one-self. Therefore, the appropriate subject matter for an intended audience is a topic directly related to the audience.

The third (green) phase of the evidence-based leadership model references data referenced in the third super-theme, Air Force Wide Social Media Themes. Content

within this theme described the commander centric responsibility to educate subordinates on professional social media regulations. This motivation to educate subordinates was motivated by interaction with commanders who felt an isolated fear of social media retribution. To combat this fear, the expeditionary wing commander teamed with his public affairs specialists to define a shortlist of principle attributes associated with professional social media communication. These attributes were transparent, timely, and truthful communication. Every commander will remain well clear of unwanted professional retribution if they internalize these attributes within their own communication and, more importantly, educate their subordinates to do the same.

The fourth (red) phase of the evidence-based leadership model is inspired by the three C's explained by the expeditionary wing commander as a component of super-theme number one, Self-Identified Leadership Style. The general's transformational leadership style was exemplified by frequent execution of the three C's both inside and outside of his organization. These components of his overarching authentic leadership style served to highlight professional attributes that encourage the natural production of authentic communication. Specifically, the action of collaboration, connection, and communication is designed to foster a command environment where the leadership team regularly integrates themselves in- and out-side of their organization.

The fifth (yellow) and final phase of the evidence-based leadership model incorporates the critical leadership aspect identified through grounded theory research. A continuous emphasis on the three primary components of successful social media communication revealed during analysis of the findings compliments leadership psychology and the ability of a commander to speak for the unit rather than "me" or

“subordinates” (Haslam, 2011). This first primary component encourages the commander to maintain a communication environment with a focus on people first. This includes Airmen, their families, and the community. The second component returns to the theme of authentic transparent communication by reminding the commander to simply be him or herself. The third and final component ignites the foundation purposeful reflection. Together, these three components join a continuous cycle of integration at each of the four phases of the leadership model.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Two avenues for recommended future research provide opportunities to expand analysis of successful social media communication leadership styles across the four major Department of Defense service branches and investigate the ideal leadership style preferred by subordinate Airmen on the receiving end of professional social media communication within their home-station organizations. A combination of both avenues will provide the dynamic data collection required to further validate the grounded theory and evidence-based leadership model created in this study. Continued validation of the results of this study will serve to identify the grounded theory that facilitates the most *universal* evidence-based leadership model compatible with the rapid expansion of social media applications beyond Facebook. With potential expansion of the evidence-based leadership model to the professional civilian sector, the first such model to bridge the cultural gap between the defense department and civilian communication ideology, the incorporation of professional social media communication may ignite a revolution of sociological advancement to as yet undeveloped media network modalities.

The first recommendation for future research provides the opportunity to expand analysis of successful social media communication leadership models across the four major Department of Defense service branches. Differences in communication culture between the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force is dynamic. As a result, the grounded theory generated by this study does not incorporate the characteristics intrinsic to these four service branches. Suggested features of this research include the face-to-face interview of commanders from each branch that represent a variety of military operational specialties, age, command experience, and social media utilization. The solicitation of leadership anecdotes from each commander will facilitate the data required to compare and contrast similarities with results from this Air Force centric study. The greatest impact of this future research recommendation is the synthesis of social media communication throughout the joint forces environment. The unified incorporation of a universal evidence-based leadership model has the realistic potential to enhance social media education, morale, and communication amongst soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen, their families, and the communities that unite them in service.

The second recommendation for future research incorporates a 180-degree change in perspective from the data collected within this study. An identified limitation controlled by the researcher included the interview solicitation of commanders who utilized Facebook as an ancillary method of weekly group communication with subordinates assigned to their units. Therefore, Air Force leaders will substantially benefit from follow-on research that investigates the ideal leadership model preferred by subordinate Airmen on the receiving end of professional social media communication within their home-station organizations. The results of this qualitative study would

benefit from the quantitative analysis of Airmen that represent subordinates in the enlisted and junior officer grades. Specifically, the five super-themes and evidence-based leadership model will be subjected to critical feedback from the Airmen who serve as a critical component in the communication cycle. This combination mixed-methods approach will yield the dynamic data analysis required to further validate the grounded theory and evidence-based leadership model created in this study. A supplementary follow-up to this introduction of subordinate analysis will be the compliment of family and community inclusion in this study. The combination of data analyzed from the complete compliment of social media audiences provides the necessary research attributes to effectively confirm the grounded theory and evidence-based leadership model for the successful future of social media leadership communication.

The impact of these two proposed recommendations for future research has the potential to permeate successful social media leadership communication worldwide across limitless professional cultures and ideologies. With the ability to interchange Airmen for employee in phase one of the evidence-based leadership model comes advanced correlation to any professional establishment with the motivation to improve their intra-organizational communication. The opportunity for universal application to every social media application will be on the horizon when accompanied by sound grounded theory research.

### **Reflections of the Researcher**

The significant academic growth and professional development experienced by the researcher increased exponentially since the selection of this dissertation topic in 2013. Information gained during this three-year period of personal life-enrichment

provided insight into the depth of leadership maturation and professional progression. These advancements directly correlate to the dynamic depth of knowledge gained in the realm of leadership as a result of this study. The combination of intense research methodology, insightful interview dialogue with commanders, and personal reflection have cemented a permanent leadership confidence influenced by a purposeful focus on people. The theme behind this final reflection is a new beginning. There has been a noticeable transition these last three years measured by personal growth in leadership perspective and utilization of self-reflection.

Recognizing of this transition motivated the researcher to enhance his vision of communication leadership potential. In addition to this vision, he discovered a newfound appreciation for service to others inspired by the leadership revelations founded within this study. This initiative has been formed by a new foundation within his life inspired by the leadership principles of people first, purposeful reflection, and authentic transparent communication. These personal developments beg the question “what’s next?” Simply refining a personal grasp on leadership strengths through a grounded theory lens has yet to levy a direct benefit on leadership culture in the Air Force or society. Herein lies the focal point for the vision designed as the way forward. These newfound strengths will serve to guide leadership initiatives that strengthen others when met with leadership challenges related to social media and intra-organization communication. A significant moment in life, the researcher feels a strong sense of professional pride as an experienced leader with the maturity of self-reflection to guide incoming officers and their families toward joint success and shared personal and professional developments. The transition from dissertation defense to doctoral graduate

sparks an exciting development filled with new challenges and the responsibility to honor the significant academic growth and professional development achieved.

The next challenge in the months and years ahead revolves around a call for established leaders to dedicate time required to familiarize them with the strength of communication fascinated by social media. This researcher calls for defense leadership and research specialists to test the grounded theory and evidence-based research model within their own organizations to effectively integrate social media leadership communication into commonplace correspondence within society. These leaders will substantially benefit from their own authentic transparent communication as social media continues to permeate the world's technologically networked population toward ubiquitous inclusion in society. An appealing combination of limited risk and substantial gain define the characteristics that serve as the motivational front for implementation of this grounded theory and leadership model. The invention of the telephone and implementation of email via the Internet has forever changed the way people communicate. The dawn of social media is behind us, and the future of its implementation looks even brighter than its commonplace communication ancestors.

### **Summary**

Five components within Chapter Five articulated the wealth of potential contributions to the body of leadership knowledge within the United States Air Force directly associated with results achieved in this study and associated recommendations for future research. The summary, purpose, and aim of the study first set the stage for the depth of understanding required of the dissertation topic. Discussion of evidence-based leadership model implementation described three dissemination methods. These primary

methods for dissemination included local commander driven mentorship, researcher authored publications, and the solicitation of Air University. Leadership defined roles in the implantation phase are the responsibility of every professional who selects the model as a technique to effectively implement the described social media communication ideology. Recommendations for further research rely on a mixed-method approach to capture data across the four major Department of Defense service branches, subordinate Airmen on the receiving end of professional social media communication, their families, and local community. Reflections from the researcher were the exclusive thoughts and educated perspective of an experienced academic and seasoned Air Force officer. The intrinsic motivation to synchronize a flourishing cultural communication phenomenon with a service branch that prides itself on serving at the cutting edge of technological advances sparked the researcher's initial interest in this dissertation topic while assigned in combat operations overseas. The conclusion of this journey has inspired a driven necessity for social media communication innovation in the United States Air Force beyond a reasonable doubt. Instead of the end, this is a crucial first step in leadership innovation required to decisively advance professional communication with the limitless capabilities of social media that mirror the transformation ignited by email and the telephone. The generation of communication revolution begins now.

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*Appendix A***Participant Request Letter**

Sir or Ma'am,

My name is Major Joshua Singaas and I am a doctoral candidate at Creighton University. It is an honor to request your participation in the final research phase of my doctoral study titled, *Innovative Air Force Leadership: A Qualitative Study using Facebook and the Development of Leadership through Social Media*. The scope of this study will substantially benefit from leadership experiences and professional anecdotes related to the professional use of Facebook as a communication tool within your unit.

This qualitative study relies on the exclusive interview of active duty commanders for data collection. Thank you for setting aside 15 minutes of your day to ensure your interview will be accurately captured in person through the use of recorded audio to ensure the complete content of your remarks are saved for comprehensive data analysis.

As a note of consideration, I pledge to maintain the utmost confidentiality of your participation. While the entire interview will be transcribed, your remarks will be annotated with a numerical identifier to mask your name, unit and operational location. The only two people able to confirm your identity will be the interview participant and I.

In conclusion, a direct benefit to yourself, your unit, our United States Air Force and the Department of Defense will be a dissertation that defines a leadership model that identifies *the* most effective communication style for the professional use of social media.

Should you have questions, please contact me at JoshuaSingaas@Creighton.edu.

Sincerely

Major Joshua Singaas

*Appendix B***Interview Protocol<sup>1</sup>**

Interview Protocol: *Air Force Leadership Innovation through the Utilization of Social Media: A Qualitative Study*

**Time of Interview:**

**Date:**

**Place:**

**Interviewer:** Joshua Andrew Singaas

**Interviewee:**

**Position of Interviewee:** Wing/Group/Squadron Commander

Thank you for participating as a critical component of this qualitative data collection.

You have agreed to participate in a Creighton University dissertation study where your candid interview responses may be selected for inclusion in a final research publication.

To ensure the utmost confidentiality, your personal and professional identity will be masked to the general public from this point forward.

**Close-Ended Questions:**

(I'd like to begin with six close-ended questions that record demographics unique to your leadership experience. Please ask if any question requires further clarification or amplification. These questions are merely an outline of the subject matter research, and I offer the opportunity to clarify any question and encourage you to elaborate on answers you see fit to include in this research study.)

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<sup>1</sup>Adapted from: Creswell, J. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Sage, Thousand Oaks, 127-131.

- a. Please state your rank and position for the record.
- b. How many years of service do you have in the Air Force? How old are you?
- c. How long have you been in your current position?
- d. How many command tours have you completed, including this one?
- e. What is your primary career field?
- f. How many Airmen are assigned within your organization?

**Open-Ended Questions:**

- a. Since the start of your command tenure, describe an anecdote where you recognized the establishment of your personal leadership style...
- b. Recalling these leadership developments, how have they influenced your approach to professional interaction with Airmen in your unit? Describe your professional interaction through social media applications such as Facebook...
- c. How has your leadership style adapted to improve subordinate morale and welfare with the implementation of Facebook communication?
- d. Describe a professional Facebook activity that caused a negative response among subordinate Airmen...
- e. Describe an example how suggestions from subordinate Airmen have improved the quality of Facebook interaction and bridged the wide military age gap...
- f. How does your leadership style used during personal face-to-face contact change when you communicate to subordinates through social media?
- g. How would you define successful leadership communication?

**Probe Questions:**

- a. Given the opportunity to change one aspect of Air Force social media, describe how your lessons learned might offer insight to improve communication...
- b. Describe how utilizing Facebook has improved information dissemination amongst subordinate Airmen today, compared to your first command tour...
- c. How do you incorporate recommendations for improving social media communication? Who provides them?

**Additional questions that provide depth and breadth:**

How would you describe that in a different way?

I would like to hear more about that.

What was the effect of that incident?

What were the consequences?

What was your reaction to that behavior?

Take me through your thought processes during that time.

*Appendix C***Participant Consent Form**

Consent to Participate in a Research Study  
Creighton University

**TITLE OF STUDY:** *Air Force Leadership Innovation through the Utilization of Social Media: A Qualitative Study*

**INVESTIGATOR:** Joshua Andrew Singaas

**WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?** The purpose of the study is to interview active duty Air Force commanders to gain personal insight into the most effective communication style for the professional use of social media.

**WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?** Joshua Singaas, a doctoral candidate at Creighton University, under the guidance of Dr. William Raynovich and Dr. Peggy Hawkins.

**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?** To define a leadership model that identifies *the* most effective communication style for the professional use of social media.

**WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?**

The study will be conducted at an Air Force installation in the Midwest United States. Your participation will last up to 15 minutes in an unclassified location.

**WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?** You will be asked to answer a series of questions pertaining to the unique characteristics of your leadership style, your history of social media use, and the incorporation of social media into your professional leadership communication.

**ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**  
I invite you to decline this invitation if you actively refrain from social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.).

**ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?** An immediate benefit from your participation is the direct correlation of your interview to the creation of a sound leadership model that defines the most efficient leadership style utilized via social media.

**DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?** Participation is voluntary and confidential.

**WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?** The transcript of your interview will be documented using a numerical identifier that will mask your name,

rank, unit and geographic location. I will reference your location by region (Asia, Western United States, and Central United States) and general mission type (Operations, Mission Support, Communications, etc.).

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS? Should you have any questions, please contact me directly at JoshuaSingsaas@Creighton.edu or 940-782-4446.

Please initial each activity and initial each step you agree to.

\_\_\_\_\_ Your interview will be recorded using audio only

\_\_\_\_\_ Field notes and transcription of your interview will be annotated with a numerical identifier to mask your name, rank, unit and specific location

\_\_\_\_\_ You will have the freedom to strike comments from the transcript at your discretion

.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information provided and agree participate in this research study.

Printed name of participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of researcher \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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*Appendix D***Interview Transcript****Expeditionary Wing Commander (Brigadier General)**

- Singsaas: Thank you for participating as a critical component of this qualitative data collection. You have agreed to participate in a Creighton University dissertation study where your candid interview responses may be selected for inclusion in a final research publication. To insure the utmost confidentiality, your personal and professional identity will be masked to the general public from this point forward.
- I'd like to start off with those six questions. Please state your rank and your position for the record.
- Wing Commander: Brigadier General; [Expeditionary] Wing Commander
- Singsaas: How many years of service do you have in the Air Force?
- Wing Commander: Twenty-five
- Singsaas: How old are you?
- Wing Commander: 49.
- Singsaas: Thank you. How long have you been in your current position?
- Wing Commander: Seven months.
- Singsaas: How many command tours have you completed, including this one?
- Wing Commander: Completed two. Executing my third.
- Singsaas: What is your primary career field?
- Wing Commander: 11F3H, F-16 pilot.
- Singsaas: How many Airmen are assigned within your current organization?
- Wing Commander: 1800 Airman with an additional 1000 contractors.

Singsaas: Since the start of your command tenure, describe an anecdote where you recognized the establishment of your personal leadership style.

Wing Commander: I strongly believe in and talk frequently about collaborating, connecting and communicating (3 Cs) at all levels inside and outside of an organization...and doing so frequently.

I was driving on the flight line with the [wing] Command Chief, stopping along the way to chat with Airmen. I approached one Airman (an Airman First Class) and, without pause, he rattled off the new wing mission statement and priorities (most of them. And mostly correct). I had just formally released the document two days prior. [I was] totally impressed with the Airman, but more so with his chain of command. From the Group Superintendent down to the A1C, they grasped and embraced my style.

Singsaas: Recalling these leadership developments, how have they influenced your approach to professional interaction with Airmen in your unit? Describe your professional interaction through social media applications such as Facebook...

Wing Commander: Based on the above story, I redoubled my 3 C efforts. Which led me to find a way to use social media. My PA (Public Affairs) shop helped me establish a Facebook site and we discussed purpose and most effective use of this medium.

I used Facebook for most of my two years as a Wing Commander at [my previous assignment] and the entire seven months here at [my current command assignment]. It's important to note that I prioritized social media interactions differently depending on location. That is...

[In Europe], I focused on Airman recognition and information sharing involving the entire spectrum of Airmen and the Community at a base in the countryside of [Europe] (Audience: Airmen and families at [base in Europe]). We captured Airmen at work, quarterly award winners, events (on & off base), and upcoming activities (on and off base). We also held live social media events for all to participate in. Extremely successful and useful.

At [the expeditionary wing] I focus mainly on Airman recognition and their impact on the mission and avoid info sharing (Audience: Airmen's home station families and friends). Less impactful

overall, but a valuable way to showcase what our Airmen do in a combat zone.

Singsaas: What do you believe is the climate-perception of your professional interaction through Facebook? How has your leadership style adapted to improve subordinate morale and welfare with the implementation of Facebook communication?

Wing Commander: I believe the perception is my command chief and I [are] transparent, approachable and human. We are real people, sincere, and care about our Airmen. Because of the transparent, approachable, and human interaction, I believe it made the Airmen (and their families, we've had many spouses chat us up in the Base Exchange) more comfortable in approaching the command chief and I on and off duty. They weren't and are not scared to ask questions or suggest improvements to the base or bring up challenges in their work centers.

Singsaas: Describe a professional Facebook activity that caused a negative response among subordinate Airmen.

Wing Commander: I can't think of a specific Facebook activity that generated a negative response. All of our Facebook posts focused on positive events, activities, and awards. Leaders need to be selective in the types of information they post. Facebook is not the place to discuss squadron deactivations, deployments, base policies, etc. There will always be negative Nancy's out there, and they can generate a tremendous amount of negative energy quickly via social media. Once that chain gets started, it's extremely difficult to win with words in a medium that's optimized for short statements and pictures. Town halls and face-to-face communication is far more effective.

Singsaas: Describe ways that suggestions from subordinate Airmen have improved the quality of Facebook interaction and bridged the wide military age gap...

Wing Commander: The only suggestion that I can recall was a simple statement from one of my young Airmen at the start of my Facebook. He suggested, "Sir, keep it short and share pictures." I got the message. They rarely read more than what is on their screens, and love the pictures that showcase them or their friends and families.

Singsaas: How does your leadership style used during personal face-to-face contact change when you communicate to subordinates through social media?

- Wing Commander: I don't know that my style changes. I use more words when I communicate face-to-face.
- Singsaas: How would you define successful leadership communication?
- Wing Commander: Transparent, Timely, and Truthful! Tell them what you know and when you know it. Don't lie.
- Singsaas: Very cool. Given the opportunity to change one aspect of Air Force social media, describe how your lessons learned might offer insight to improve communication...
- Wing Commander: I still run into commanders who are afraid of [using] social media. They are usually concerned about OPSEC (Operational Security), confrontation, and negative Nancy's. They don't believe there is value in this form of communication. I believe there is tremendous value in this two-way communication. By empowering participants and encouraging participation from the target audience, not only do we receive immediate feedback on the effectiveness of our communication, but it also necessitates us to be more refined in how and what we communicate. And, as I previously stated, it shows that we are transparent, approachable and human.
- Singsaas: Describe how utilizing Facebook has improved information dissemination amongst subordinate Airmen today, compared to your first command tour...
- Wing Commander: In some overseas locations, social media has become the primary way of providing real-time information to active-duty, civilians and family members. At [previous wing command assignment], our Public Affairs [team] regularly posted updated road conditions, school closures, and other frequently changing but important information on their Facebook page (along with the standard Public Affairs products). Once the community caught on and they added the page to their favorites, we also gained the benefit of viewing the rest of the information we wanted them to see.
- Similar story, my current Public Affairs officer, who was stationed at [Asia], stated that their Facebook page served as the sole real-time information source for emergency information for the 50,000 American citizens on the island of Okinawa. This became valuable during the island's several typhoons each year, for which the Wing Commander was the authority on declaring conditions that affected every AMCIT (American Citizen) on the island.

Singsaas: How do you incorporate recommendations for improving social media communication? Who provides them?

Wing Commander: I trust my PA, who is (and should be) an expert in communication.

Strategically (for all commanders), I think the single point of common learning is during the Squadron, Group, and Wing Commander's courses (I think we recently added this [wing course] to our courses). Great opportunity for the Air Force to teach our newest commander's the benefits (and challenges) of using social media.

Singsaas: Thank you so much, sir.

*Appendix E***Interview Transcript****Communications Group Commander (Colonel)**

- Singsaas: I'd like to thank you for participating in this critical component of qualitative data collection. Your candid interview responses may be selected for inclusion in a final research publication. To ensure the utmost confidentiality, your personal and professional identity will be masked to the general public from this point forward. Only you and I will know your personal information that you've just discussed. I'd like to begin by asking six questions.
- Comm Group CC: Sure.
- Singsaas: Sir, can you please state your rank and your position for the record?
- Comm Group CC: Colonel and Communications Group Commander.
- Singsaas: How many years of service do you have in the Air Force?
- Comm Group CC: 21.
- Singsaas: How old are you?
- Comm Group CC: 44.
- Singsaas: How long have you been in your current position as the Communications Group Commander?
- Comm Group CC: Six months.
- Singsaas: How many command tours have you completed, including this one?
- Comm Group CC: Three.
- Singsaas: What is your primary career field designation?
- Comm Group CC: 17 Delta, which is a cyber communications.
- Singsaas: How many Airmen, approximately, are assigned within your organization?

Comm Group CC: Four hundred.

Singsaas: Since the start of your command tenure, please describe an anecdote where you recognized the development of your personal leadership style?

Comm Group CC: Okay. I'll tell you, some of it is just, we'll say humor, and that is to me, with the amount of information that comes out. Everyone gets inundated with emails or social media, or whatever method we use. Even [the wing commander] will say it ... I realize that nobody even reads my safety messages. You wonder, well gosh, am I sending stuff out that no one's reading? To me, I try to use a little bit more of humor or a very lighthearted writing style to try to get people just to want to read it. Then, I think if they read then they get the little message. I feel like the same thing happens in a church homily. If you get a long boring homily, no one pays attention. They fall asleep and wonder what they're going to do for lunch and what are they going to do all afternoon. If you actually give a short funny meaningful one, people pay attention and then they can ... That's kind of, I would say it's probably my style, is trying to deliver it in a way where people will want to listen and hear it so you can ... The message is delivered.

Singsaas: A way to help you relate to the Airmen that are younger than you and vice versa? To bridge that connection?

Comm Group CC: Not necessarily. I think it does help, I think it helps. That's not necessarily the intent because I find out no matter what your age is, sometimes you get tired of all the emails and you get tired of the articles or the media, news, or this and that, and so sometimes you've got to have a niche. You've got to have the ability to deliver it in way that's different. That makes people want to go, oh hey, you know. Co-worker just sent an email, I wonder what the heck it's going to have in today, and the curiosity kills the cat, they actually read it. I'm not sure it's necessarily just the younger ones, because the method I deliver is email and that's not always the medium of choice. Even if it's in commander's calls too, it's about the same. I think it works for everybody. It works for me and I ... I made comment on the homilies. I pay attention to my churches homily because I actually find it interesting, you know, god knows what the guy is going to say next, so I pay attention. I'm 44, but my kids, 9, 13, and 15, pay attention as well and that's what I like. I like to do something similar.

Singsaas: What's one way that that perspective has changed since your first command tour?

Comm Group CC: I would say my first command tour, I assumed like, I'm the commander; of course my email's being read. Why wouldn't it be, because I'm the commander. Now I realize you still got to work to get those things read and to deliver your message and even if you deliver it once, it might only have gone to 15% of your folks that were at the commanders call. You know, you have shift workers, you have night shift day shift, some folks that were mission critical and they couldn't come to the commanders call and they don't get the message, or they don't all read mass emails or whatever. You realize you got to kind of do it over and over again. Even though you think you're repeating the same thing a thousand times, you might have to say it 10-15 times before everyone has finally heard it now.

I understand I'm probably more cognizant of the fact that you've got to have a consistent message and as much as you think everyone's already heard it, they haven't. That's probably... If I think of [the wing commander], you know. I hear them talk of innovation over and over and over again, and you hear them talk about innovation over and over and over again. Not necessarily members of my... You know, CSTs (Communications Support Teams) or CFPs (Communications Focal Point), or the SATCOM team has probably not heard it over and over again but they've probably heard it once or twice or three times. Where you and I might have heard it fifteen, twenty, thirty, forty times you know. I think that that's valuable and I think someone said once, "You know you're successful when other people can give your speech for you, and that you've delivered it."

Singsaas: Absolutely. Recalling these leadership developments, how have they influenced your approach to professional interaction with your Airmen in your unit?

Comm Group CC: I'd say I'm just typically not the stuffy hard ass dictator; it's just not my style. I've never been like that; I'm fairly easy going. I get fired up at some things but for the most part I try to be approachable. I try to make sure that everyone knows I'll go to bat for them, so that they want to go to bat for our mission, do the things you want to do. I would say for the most part it's just... My style is more of an easy going laid back. From outages and things like that, sometimes I've had the president (President of the United States) throw a phone at me and say, hey this damn cellphone doesn't work. Once you have a president throw a phone at you, all communications outages are relevant from there on out. I've worked for the chairmen (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff), I've had the chairmen have internet outages and email outages that,

you know, hairs on fire and everything, you get to the point where you don't get worked up and get oh my gosh, if I don't get the wing commander an answer within five minutes, the worlds going to end. The wing commander would rather have a good answer in two hours then a half ass answer in five minutes. There's that balance, I think my approach is a little bit more laid back and calculated then it is 'seat-of-the-pants.'

Singsaas: Puts it on perspective.

Comm Group CC: Yeah I think so.

Singsaas: Describe your professional interaction through social media applications.

Comm Group CC: Here, we don't in fact ... We just deleted our com group Facebook page, which hasn't been used in two group commanders now, it was used by a previous commander about three years ago, and the last commander didn't use it, and we haven't really used it there. I think at a group level, especially when you're a small group, I don't really need to put in another level of social media on top of the squadrons. The squadrons have their pages and some are better then others and one of my squadrons has a great Facebook page, the spouses are involved and everything like PT's on it and Key Spouse events coming up. They're really active in it. The [other] squadron, not as much so.

I think that's maybe some of the dynamics of the leadership. Single vs. married, so, his wife's really active and she's really trying to get all the spouses involved. There's much stronger in that whole picture then my other squadron commander, who is a single workaholic. She's so fired up and so focused on the mission. By the way, as much as she focuses on the mission, she's great with taking care of people too. Sometimes she doesn't think beyond the work, where I would, as someone with a spouse or with three kids. We may just think things in different perspective. I think you see that in their use of social media, where [one squadron] is fairly heavy and [the other] squadron is not. I'm at the group level, just because we only have two squadrons and we're a small group, I just don't feel the need to put another Facebook page out there.

Things like LinkedIn, I'm active on LinkedIn, I'm active on personal Facebook all the time and I have many folks who I've worked with over the last 10 years who are still active on my Facebook page. Half of my squadron from [Europe] is on my

Facebook page, and my spouse, my wife, keeps in touch with almost all the spouses from [Europe] like you wouldn't believe. I can tell you every A1C (Airman First Class) who's now a tech sergeant. Therefore I think, although it's a personal Facebook page, the professional development of that, of the folks that reach out to you, it's like, hey sir, can I call you sometime about a look at our assignments, or what do you think is the next best thing for me? I'd like you to write a recommendation for me? That gives people the approach-ability to reach you, even when they don't work for you in your current command, or they want to catch you in a less supervision change of command and ask if they can reach out to you from a personal perspective.

I think if you use your Facebook... I would say my Facebook is not an area that I use for complaining or whining or ... I use it to post something about my family and me. It's not something that I would have a problem with any subordinate from any past job. Be like, oh, colonel [interviewee] is saying these bad things or posting pictures that are inappropriate. I just don't, so I'm okay using my personal Facebook in a professional manner in that aspect. LinkedIn, I'm in LinkedIn, I think I probably have a thousand people linked-in, just because they reach out to you and you get these random invites and I found them good for networking.

You go somewhere... If you're going TDY (Temporary Duty) somewhere, you know who's there and you can sync back up with them. You know what they're doing and you can ask them questions about, you know, sometimes I just know this guys the Communications group commander at [Base in United States], we don't have any com group commanders in [this Major Command], so what's it like to be a communications group commander [there]? I can ask a buddy and say, hey what are you doing? What are the big challenges there? I find that it's in a more laid back personal perspective you can kind of answer some of those professional questions. I think it just opens up opportunities.

Singsaas:

I like how you have those second to your connections, so you can see someone that you know and that you have one person in common with, and that just further builds those relationships that you're talking about. Still professional, but it's outside of your current scope of this office. Really I think what's unique about the Air Force, or really, any service in the DOD (Department of Defense), is that expansion of your position is truly outside of your office.

Comm Group CC: Oh absolutely. I'm sure... From LinkedIn, you'll get an invite from somebody you're not quite sure who it is ...

Singsaas: Let's validate this real quick.

Comm Group CC: You're like, oh gosh, that name sounds ... Then you look at the, who are they connected to, and you're like oh, now I feel that we shared a common connections with ... It was at my joint staff J6 position, so that's it, that was one of the contractors I worked with in joint staff for running the in IT1's in the Navy that I worked with. All of a sudden people who I would have typically may have forgotten, I have just not worked with them closely ... Because I see their professional connections, and now it helps me associate it back to okay got it, yeah that's one of those folks in that ... That's what we have in common, is XYZ or ... I think that really helps, even on Facebook.

You look at some of the friends you have on Facebook, and you're like "I don't know who this guy is," and then you realize their seven friends you have in common are all your high school buddies. You're like I don't remember them in high school but I guess if they're buddies with my seven high school friends, I guess I'll just friend them. I think it helps keep your network, not large, but help to keep in touch with folks that you might have forgotten about. You never know when one of those is going to come back and you're like, oh wow, this guy is the CEO of Go Pro. Hey, let me ask a question about something. You had a Go Pro question you have to link up with someone. There's just things like that where second thrower affects that have some benefits that you would never imagined when you befriended them or accepted their LinkedIn request.

Singsaas: It just makes that community a lot larger.

Comm Group CC: Oh absolutely.

Singsaas: What do you believe is the perception of your interaction through Facebook, from the Airmen and the civilian contractors that you just mentioned?

Comm Group CC: Most of the Facebook thing for me has been, post that job. Sometimes when you're in that job, for instance, like [my squadron commander] and I are not friends on Facebook. Although, she always pops up as a common one, but I don't ever reach out and say hey, be my friend request, because you're a little hesitant about those social norms from a personal Facebook perspective as

opposed to professional Facebook perspective. Then what ends up happening, when ones getting ready PCS (Permanent Change of Station) or the other ones getting ready to PCS, they're like oh hey now I don't mind reaching out because I don't want to look like a brown-noser, I don't want to look like a stalker, I don't want to look like any of those types of things. Most of my [Europe] communications squadron Facebook and LinkedIn (LinkedIn's a little bit different, LinkedIn it's very common to get them while you're still in that position, I get them from here all the time. Facebook, since it's a personal Facebook page, it tends to be when they're getting to PCS or maybe I'm getting ready to PCS, and all of a sudden they come in.

The perception, I think it makes people realize that you're human. You're not some unique person who puts your pants on any differently, or should be treated any differently. There's no rank in a personal Facebook, and so you're just [interviewee], you're not colonel [interviewee], you're not a group commander. You're just a guy who watches soccer practice, walks your dog, and has dinner and takes pictures in front of Christmas lights with your kids and sends out Christmas cards. You're just normal, and I think it's you that makes you approachable, and they realize, oh this guys just like me. I felt more comfortable asking these simple questions, or coming to his office and saying, "He seems liked a pretty good guy from Facebook, so maybe I can come and talk to him and say hey, I'm having a problem in the squadron, I'm having an issue with my supervisor." I felt uncomfortable jumping the chain of commands, I didn't really know, but you seem pretty normal, let me just ask you what you think. I think it opens up some opportunities that people might not have felt comfortable with before.

Singsaas: Can you confirm that there have been instances in the past that folks have possibly felt that way through those social media interactions, and they've come to you with questions like that?

Comm Group CC: I have, I'm trying to think of an example. Not one where it's a disciplinary related one, I'm trying to think if there's one where it's just more of crew professional development guidance. A former flight commander of mine at [Europe] is in [another command] now. We're on Facebook so I'm seeing all his posts and he sees all my posts, we usually don't really talk over the phone or email that much, but we post on each other's comments every now and then, or like it or something like that. It keeps that constant connection there, even though you're not talking or spending a whole lot of ... Investing a whole lot of time, but there's still like, "Hey yeah, it's [your former flight commander] what's going on?"

Then for him it was kind of the decision of, he's a major, he's getting ready to go off to IDE [Intermediate Developmental Education], and he's thinking about getting out (of the Air Force). He's going to start up his own ... Well, he's been big into [Fortune 500 Company], his wife has been. I don't know if you've ever heard of [Fortune 500 Company], but [Fortune 500 Company] sell like this ... [NFL Superstar] is a big spokesmen for them. The tight end, [NFL Superstar], and [Fortune 500 Company] is a sponsor of the [NFL Team's] football field. There's a [Fortune 500 Company] Bowl, later in December there's the [Fortune 500 Company] Bowl. I've never heard of it but they sell [products], and wife's a big fan. Anyways, it's one of those multi level marketing's where you have teams underneath your teams and underneath your teams and you sell products and you get a cut of the whatever.

He is now making like \$150,000.00 a year in [Fortune 500 Company]. More than his major pay is, and so he's about to get out. Because he goes to his command, after his IDE, he'll probably go to command in our career field, and if you go to command then you can't really push this because that's under command influence and that would kill their career, plus they have to move, and so all of a sudden he's debating on getting out. He reaches out to me and, what do you think, here's kind of what my thought process is, what will happen next? We were able to have those conversations about, yes, if you go to IDE as a communications officer you're probably going to go to command afterwards, that's where ... Not many folks go to IDE in residence and they don't have very many communication Major's positions, so you're probably going to have to go to command first.

You might get two of them. Two commands, well that's four years you're not selling [Fortune 500 Company products] because you don't have undue command influence. That's two years that you're moving to a new place and you know, trying to redevelop their networks, and so he's a little nervous about that. Just talk through some of those things, that's just an example where I know he reached out to me because if we hadn't talked in six years, since we left [Europe], my guess is he probably wouldn't have reached out to me but since we kind of keep in touch over Facebook, it gives him a resource.

Singsaas:

Describe a professional Facebook activity, or LinkedIn for instance, that caused a negative response among subordinate Airmen.

Comm Group CC: Only because I'm very sensitive to what I put onto Facebook. I enjoy reading what everyone else posts and I post very rarely myself. I will say from people who are on Facebook, and this is taken from the spouse network as well. I'll watch some spouse make a comment like, "well my supervisor is terrible, I can't believe he's got work on Thanksgiving." You'll see some complaints that you get because you can see your friends-friends posts or whatever. Okay, well what's going on? One is, is this airman not communicating to his spouse how the shift change works? Some people have to work on Thanksgiving because we have shift work.

Even though your buddies next door are also in the communications squadron maybe they're not in a 24/7-work center. Let's say a knowledge management person gets the weekend off but the missile warning center person doesn't. It might be your next door neighbors, most both think of themselves as [part of the] communication families, but one's wondering why they have to work on Thanksgiving and the other one doesn't. You get snagged so you worry about how that happened, or I can't believe my husband has to deploy, it's not his turn, I know these other folks who have never deployed, and what the spouses know is not the husbands begging to be deployed, he just can't wait to get on another deployment because it's either going to help their career out, or they maybe just want to get away from home. I don't know what it is, but they don't realize that Sally hasn't deployed yet and it's her turn but Bob begged to take it.

I don't know if it's negative or positive. You can spread some negativity around by seeing what's on [social media], like "Oh wow that does seem unfair." Boy that communications group doesn't know what they're doing. How come Bob's been deployed twice and Sally hasn't deployed at all? That's bullshit, and so it's ... Excuse my language. That can be negative, but at the same time, you'd rather hear about it so you can act on it and say, hey you know what, let me better communicate, here's the situation. Normally we take volunteers first, and if that's an option great. In some cases we don't take volunteers first, because a unique skillset or skill level or whatever you have. We might have to send someone ... Maybe Sally, although she hasn't been deployed, isn't a seven level record custodian, and this deployment calls for seven level record custodian, so we send Bob, who is a seven levels record custodian who's already been once before. I think the positive is you will see the negativity, and then you can act on it. Negative is that you can spread negativity pretty fast.

Singsaas: Have you ever identified an example like that? Have you seen it on, say Facebook, and then brought it to the attention as an issue within your organization, to try and correct or realign?

Comm Group CC: Oh absolutely. Things just like that. I've seen spouses, who are friends of my wife, who I'm friends with my wife [on Facebook], therefore I see my friends-friends, at times depending on what they're sayings are, and I will see that, I'm like oh, okay, I won't ever say I got it from Facebook but that's my data mining source. I can come back and say hey, to the squadron commanders, and to the flight commanders, and to the chiefs and the first sergeants, hey just to understand, here's how we do it, we're...the same example I just used was on deployments.

In some cases, if you're a volunteer for deployment, we'll give you an opportunity to go. However, there's a professional advantage for everyone to go on a deployment. It's either you're volunteering, we might send somebody who hasn't been, to give them that opportunity to grow, or we may say hey, you know what, this person doesn't want to go right now, it's not the best time for the family, we have a volunteer begging to go. Here, let's do it. There will be times that will lead to my communication. I might not say hey, I saw on Facebook that everyone is complaining about this. But I'll say hey, let's talk about what's the decision making process. How do we make decisions?

Another instance, sometimes you'll have folks that are frustrated that, well the commander or first sergeant or the leadership loves, Airman so and so. It's not fair, you can see that and you're like, "well wait a second, they think Airman so and so gets all the wonderful things but they don't realize that Airman so and so is the first one that comes in to fix a problem on the weekends, Airman so and so is the first one to volunteer to be the CFC (Combined Federal Campaign) rep or Airman so and so is the go-to guy when the wing commander has an outage and he can go over to the wing commander's office and fix it right away." As opposed to when we have to send two or three other folks to go over there, or so and so has a more professional image.

Sometimes you see that, and you can then communicate with folks to say, "hey, here's what it takes to be Airman of the quarter or senior Airman Below the Zone or these types of things. You don't have to highlight that person but you can kind of say, these are what's important; this is what we're looking for. You can use it as an educational tool.

Singsaas: Definitely. Have suggestions from subordinate Airmen improved the quality of Facebook interaction? On that last response that you just gave, is it a learned response? Where you've seen examples in past commands that have helped you improve?

Comm Group CC: To be honest, I don't know that I've seen the direct advantage of what's happened. I feel like I better communicate it now when I need to do a better job communicating. I'm trying to think if I've really seen a direct positive that I've gotten feedback from Airmen saying hey, "that's exactly what we're looking for, thanks for communicating that." I don't know that I have a good example to be honest with you. I wish I did.

Singsaas: It's pretty tough to gauge.

Comm Group CC: Yeah, and the further the separation between my rank and the subordinates' rank, you get less feedback on it. Sometimes you're the last one to hear and so you don't really know. Right now, if you think of most communications, you see two up two down from where you are. That means most of communication is at squad commanders, flight commanders, or maybe the chiefs and the first sergeants but necessarily the first sergeants or first line supervisors anymore. As a squadron commander, my flight commanders, my first line supervisors, my superintendents, my NCOIC's (Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge), I had a lot of interaction with them, and as group commander I have about one or two levels other than that.

Now my feedback comes mainly through climate assessments or I heard so and so say so and so say this and so it's two or three times removed. So I don't at this level. I hope you get a different answer at a squadron commander level then you would at a group commander, or even from the wing commander, I'm sure it's tough for him to get feedback. He goes out and seeks it at Airmen leadership school or FTAC (First Term Airman Course) classes. Even when he's speaking, he has a chance to solicit feedback. I do the same thing in commander's calls. But you know Commanders calls are in front of everyone. It's easily like crickets sometimes with feedback.

Singsaas: What leadership method of yours has generated the greatest reception among your organization?

Comm Group CC: I would say getting out and about would be the best reception, and when saying that, that also would imply that you couldn't do it enough. More so than Facebook or email or any of the social

media is face to face contact and getting out, out and about and talking to them. With that said, I don't think I get out and about as much as I need to. When you're so spread out over many buildings, I need to do a better job of it. That to me trumps social media. You still got to go back to good old fashioned leadership where they got to see you in person, they got to shake your hand, they got to see that you care enough to get out into the work center, and you ask them questions and talk to them.

I try to design some of those things into a lot of the meetings I have. Okay, let me go out to your work [center]. You want to talk about something; hey instead of coming to my office I'll go out there or schedule a weekly meeting. We do a QA or familiarization or WIT (Wing Inspection Team) type of thing every weekend. We also talk about what your items in your checklist you're struggling with, and then we do that for like 15-20 minutes, then we spend the next hour just talking about, hey, what's going in your work center, what can we do to improve it? I just find that probably more beneficial right now than social media, because you got to pick which social media is the important one. My kids will say Facebook's for parents not for kids.

Singsaas: It's true.

Comm Group CC: Once all of us got on Facebook, it's no longer cool for my daughter to be on it. Now it's Instagram and Snapchat and all that kind of stuff, and Twitter. I would say most of the young kids aren't really that hung on twitter anymore. And so, it's hard to chase which social media works, and is the best for what audience. I've asked, as a commander, "Where do you want to get information on what's going to in the Force Support Squadron?" Did you know there's a Color Run going on this weekend, how do you know about this? And half of them don't. Well, what are we doing wrong?

This didn't happen, but let's say the Color Run only had 15-20 participants. Well gosh, that sounded like a great event. I know we have a lot of people who like to run or make running fun. Why didn't we have more? They'll say, "I didn't know about it." What should we have done? How should we communicate? Should we put it on our Facebook page? Should we Tweet it out to people, or what? I'm like, no email's fine. We just know that that's how the Air Force communicates, is with email. And so, this [example] was at my airman's breakfast, when they told me. I just wanted to look at what should we do? Should we build this Facebook back up, if that'd be better? "Well no, we have our squadron one, so we don't really need one." I'm like, "okay." Tweet it out? Well, yeah,

no, nobody uses twitter anymore. Even when you guys bring up new things to the boss, how about Ask FM or whatever it is, or, was it Reddit or...

Singsaas: Reddit.

Comm Group CC: Then, Presentain, I mean, as a professional communicator I haven't heard of half these things. I try to keep in touch with what's on social media. I've been to all the silicon valley, I've been to twitter, I've been to Facebook, I've been to all these places as part of my SDE (Senior Developmental Education) program. I feel like I got pretty in touch with it. It's always something new, and when you're not on it all the time it's hard to know what the latest and greatest and the best method is. I think a variety, like what [the wing commander] has done is great. He's trying very different methods, whether it's a YouTube video or it's Ask FM, or it's a commander's call at the wing level or commanders call with each individual group. You can see that he's obviously trying multiple different avenues to get them to communicate, and I think that's great. And I think that's how you do it. If you get 30% of each avenue and you have fifteen different avenues, you're eventually going to get everybody. I think he has a pretty good model.

Singsaas: This is a study I've been conducting now, for about a year and half specifically. Just in the six months I've been in that office, I have learned a ton that you're just not exposed to because you can't really isolate one medium, like you were saying. Well sir, it's 11:51.

Comm Group CC: All right. Do you have more questions or ...

Singsaas: I have more questions, but really a lot of those we just ad-libbed.

Comm Group CC: Okay. I've got about five more minutes, anyone's that we haven't hit very well or ...

Singsaas: Let's see. I'll ask you one more if you don't mind.

Comm Group CC: Okay.

Singsaas: How would you define successful leadership communication?

Comm Group CC: That you're able to deliver your message and it's received with the intent that you delivered it. Sometimes you can deliver it, and you can say everything you want but they're not listening to what you're saying, it's irrelevant. It's not good communication. So you

got to deliver a message that's received, and they've got to be able to understand the message you delivered with the right intent. If that's having them present back to you, or sometimes you say something, you think it's clearly articulated, and this is the way it's going to be, and everyone else might think that's an option. Maybe that's one of the ways to do things, we can also do it this way. I know he said this, but really what he meant was this. So I think successful communication is making sure that the message you want delivered is successfully received with the message you were trying to convey, and not miscommunicated. It happens at home with spouses, it happens with the kids, it happens with the coworkers, it happens whether you're a colonel or an airman. It's going to happen. You've got to find a way to articulate that clearly and make sure it's received the way you anticipated it to be received. Sometimes I don't know if we always know that it really wasn't perceived the way we thought it was.

Singsaas: I think that there lies the root cause with all the problems we have with leadership at every level. When you think your leadership is conveyed 100%, but really the receiving end, may be some made up percentage, but 60%-50%, it's how I think the best leaders are the ones that get past that threshold, and make their difference that way.

Comm Group CC: I agree.

Singsaas: All right.

*Appendix F***Interview Transcript****Medical Group Commander (Colonel)**

- Singsaas: Thank you for participating as a critical component of this qualitative data collection. You have agreed to participate in a Creighton University dissertation study where your candid interview responses may be selected for inclusion in a final research publication. To insure the utmost confidentiality, your personal and professional identity will be masked to the general public from this point forward.
- Medical Group CC: Okay.
- Singsaas: I'd like to start off with those six questions. Please state your rank and your position for the record.
- Medical Group CC: Colonel, Medical Group Commander.
- Singsaas: How many years of service have you served in the Air Force?
- Medical Group CC: Twenty.
- Singsaas: How old are you?
- Medical Group CC: 47.
- Singsaas: Perfect. How long have you been in your current position?
- Medical Group CC: Five months here.
- Singsaas: How many command tours have you completed, including this one?
- Medical Group CC: Squadron as well?
- Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Medical Group CC: Four.
- Singsaas: What is your primary career field?
- Medical Group CC: Psychology.

Singsaas: How many Airmen are assigned within your current organization?

Medical Group CC: 612.

Singsaas: From the start of your command tenure, describe an anecdote where you recognized the establishment of your personal leadership style.

Medical Group CC: An anecdote ... I guess, I don't know if I have an anecdote, but I know myself that I like to be part of a team. I like coming together and having team members make decisions with me. I know that there's a time that I have to make the decision, and it's not going to be a democracy, but I like it when I can get input and consensus and buy in, because I think that's important.

Singsaas: Can you think of a time when that didn't happen, when you were on the receiving end?

Medical Group CC: In my own personal career?

Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Medical Group CC: Yes.

Singsaas: Are you able to share?

Medical Group CC: Yeah. I had a boss who I would say was a toxic leader. It wasn't, even if you would give feedback, it wasn't considered, and there was no coming back around to talk about anything. It was kind of fire in one direction. What he wanted ended up actually being the opposite of what he got, because of how he handled himself. He wanted people to feed him, feed him, feed him information, but when you brought information to him, he would blow up. There was profanity. There were emotional outbursts. It was amazing.

What people started doing, it bonded those below him together, and we would be taking care of business, but people started kind of hiding things from him, because you never knew what you were going to get. I think that was kind of a process that if there isn't a give and take, and if you don't have someone who listens, you may get the opposite of what you are asking for.

Singsaas: What way has that influenced how you listen to your subordinates now?

Medical Group CC: I think I've always been a person who listens, but I am careful. I think there are a time and a place for emotion or anger, and I think you can use that strategically. There are times when it can be powerful, but if you do it all the time, if you don't have control over it, you have bad outcomes.

Singsaas: To say the least.

Medical Group CC: Yeah.

Singsaas: Recalling these leadership developments, how have they influenced your approach to professional interaction with Airmen in this unit?

Medical Group CC: I think with each experience, you learn more about yourself, and you learn more about leading people. Everybody has a certain leadership style that's a preference, but with some people, you can't use that same cookie cutter approach. Sometimes you have to tailor that. Sometimes you have to be very direct, and for others, you have to do more coaching. I think it really makes you think about whom you're leading and how you have to approach different people or different situations.

Singsaas: Describe your professional interaction through social media. An example might be Facebook that the Air Force uses.

Medical Group CC: We use Facebook at the Med Group. Our Facebook page is mainly to get information out to beneficiaries. Closures, health information, more general information. How I've seen it done, what I would like to be able to do, and honestly, I've just been so crazy busy since I got here that I just haven't had time to do it, but maybe now that we have a little lull in inspections.

Two Wing Commanders ago, or three, General [name removed] who's I think he is at the forefront. He's got social media down. I really believe that. I think you can use it to reach larger groups and get a message out, but I think it has to somehow appeal to them. What I see through him is he uses a lot of pictures, and he'll tell stories. People love to get their pictures taken, let's face it. They'll be on Facebook with a boss, and that's pretty cool.

He'll do usually it's a group, but it's not just a picture of the group, but talks about the importance of what they do. Maybe he turned wrenches maybe he did something else. I think that's a pretty powerful way to kind of not only instill pride, but also to share our mission. I like that. Humor, too, with social media, I think it can't

just be like cut and dry kind of stuff. I think you have to mix it up a little bit.

Singsaas: A little personality perhaps.

Medical Group CC: Yeah, to draw people in. I'll see... I have a Facebook of his, and it'll pop up. I'll look. In a day's time, he's had like 6,000 views of something.

Singsaas: So, not just folks in his current organization?

Medical Group CC: No. It really spreads. I think that's pretty powerful. I know, not here, when I was at [Europe], when he was my boss there, we kind of all turned over at the same time, and we were kind of forced to do this PA (Public Affairs) video called "Meet Your Leader." Each of the groups, we all had our time slots, and it was standard questions, and none of us wanted to do it. I think it ended up pretty good that it kind of gives your philosophy out front.

They ask you to tell something about yourself that people wouldn't normally know. It was a little bit personal, and then a little bit philosophy. Then it also showed the group, not just you droning on and there's a picture of you. It was nice, because it showed actually my folks doing the job. I was talking in the background.

Singsaas: Was there an aspect of that experience with the Know Your Leader that that humanized you? That kind of took you off that command pedestal or a stage, and added a human factor to who you were, along with your philosophy? Maybe humor was something you mentioned before.

Medical Group CC: Yeah. I did a second video, and it had more humor in it. The first one, I think, was a personal, something people didn't know about me. I said I competed in gymnastics since I was a kid. On the first part of the video, there was a picture of me from years ago. That was something that made it, I guess, a little bit more personal.

Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Medical Group CC: Then the pride of why I was proud to be a medic, what the team did that was important to the mission.

Singsaas: One of the things I've learned so far is some folks will use social media as a very cookie cutter I published something, it's accomplished, my message is out there, but you look at the receiving end, and there isn't a whole lot of reception.

Medical Group CC: Yeah.

Singsaas: Especially in the example that you said with 6,000 people. There's only a couple of units in the Air Force that are even close to that large.

Medical Group CC: Yeah.

Singsaas: What do you believe is the perception of Air Force leadership interaction through Facebook?

Medical Group CC: I honestly think it's kind of discouraged. I really do. I've been told by a fellow colonel who worked at AFPC (Air Force Personnel Command) that there is a group at AFPC that monitors colonels' Facebook pages.

Singsaas: Their personal pages?

Medical Group CC: I think so.

Singsaas: Wow.

Medical Group CC: I don't know. In a way, I think it's a two-sided coin, because we're saying it's a great means to get some things out, but then at the same time, you hear stories where terrorists are monitoring Facebook, they're identifying names, you have all these people, all these names and what you do, family ties. I think that's a drawback to it.

Singsaas: It's interesting. One of the other social media outlets that I've heard has been very successful is Pinterest, for that reason. I never associated that with a professional environment, but that masks your family (because there are no [references to] family on there), your professional status (unless they know you, or know how to search for you), but they can still see those human factors, what your interests are, what your professional interests are, how well read you may be. Folks can tap into that and really understand where your philosophy comes from.

Medical Group CC: Yeah, that makes sense.

Singsaas: Think back to your first command tour, so four commands ago, how social media has evolved since then, can you recall how your personal leadership style has adapted because of that evolution?

Medical Group CC: I think I'm more aware of how it can be used, and I think particularly in large organizations, it's probably more beneficial. I think in smaller organizations, you can get out and talk with people and get the message out, and they get to know you more. As you grow, and I think that's my experience in command, is each time it gets bigger and bigger, and then it's hard to get out and talk with 600 people, so I'm going to have to do something different. I'm going to have to use something social to reach everyone.

These days, I also know, you look around, you go out to eat, everyone's sitting there, they're talking, but they're also looking at their phones. Maybe they're showing each other stuff on phones. We're just at a different place that, I think, we have to adapt to that.

Singsaas: It's the first thing they look at when they wake up.

Medical Group CC: Yeah.

Singsaas: And the last thing they look at when they go to bed.

Medical Group CC: Yeah, it's true. It really is true. It's interesting.

Singsaas: Describe a professional Facebook activity that caused a negative response among subordinate Airmen. It may be through Facebook or any other media. Because it's not always positive...

Medical Group CC: That's true. I had a Captain when I was back at [Asia]. I was Commander there, and everybody told me he liked to rap, and he sang songs. He did. He wrote really artistic, humorous emails that talked about our unit sporting events, and he'd kind of capture it. It was hilarious. It really took on the essence of what happened. It was just funny. I heard he rapped, but I never searched him out. I just didn't have time.

Like a year later, one of the other Captains said, "Hey, have you seen [his] videos?" I said, "No, I haven't." He said, "You better go look." I get on there and it's on YouTube. He's still in the military, but he has some really [negative connotations] for women and for language and just for professionalism ... I sent him an email and said, "[name removed], you've got to take this down, because you're leading people. If any one of your folks gets on YouTube and look at that, they're going to have a whole different idea about you." It was not good. Kind of the bitches, hoes, sex, all that kind of stuff. He's a good officer, really likable, but that aspect of him, once his folks see that, it'll turn them off.

- Singsaas: How'd he respond to that?
- Medical Group CC: He said, "I'll work on it. I know, I know." The last that I heard it hadn't come down. Someone said, "I don't know if he can take it down. I don't know if he put them up." That's the danger of some of it. If you don't put it up ... Even if you do put it up, I don't know how you get it down.
- Singsaas: Have suggestions from subordinate Airmen improved the quality of social media interaction within your organization? You mentioned that there are some projects you'd like to implement, time permitting.
- Medical Group CC: If I did, ideally, I'd like to do some of the stuff that General [name removed] does, because I think he does it well, but also, to get a message out. Kind of the culture that we're going towards in the Air Force, we call it high reliability, and it's very similar when you think of Air Force safety. We talk about zero harm, having a just culture that coming forward when you make mistakes so that you learn from them, but understanding the why behind them. Was it a gap in knowledge? Was it willful noncompliance? Those kinds of things. That's where we're going. It's new. It's a new concept for us in some ways, maybe packaged a little bit different. I think that's something I'd like to grasp and take that forward.
- Singsaas: What aspect of General [name removed] ideology has given you the most strength to move forward on your own?
- Medical Group CC: I think it's a way for people to gain an appreciation or feel appreciated for what they do, but also, at the same time, even with humor, conveying a serious message. Why that group's important, what they're doing. I think there's a pride in that. I think people really like that. I swear people love ... Look at how many people are taking selfies. People love to have themselves ...
- Singsaas: Selfie stick.
- Medical Group CC: Yeah, in pictures, so much we've got these sticks, and we're all taking pictures of ourselves. I don't know. I think it's a way to get a message out that you wouldn't normally be able to do or maybe that they wouldn't be as willing to listen to.
- Singsaas: Are there any risks associated with being in the medical field? You're the Commander of a medical group. Are there any risks that you think are unique to the position that you're in that possibly other Air Force organizations don't have to consider?

Medical Group CC: Yeah, I do. When we talk about zero harm and patient safety, I think patients don't necessarily think about that when they walk in our doors, that we're a high risk organization every time somebody walks in the door. Whether it's a needle stick, or it's a lab that's not returned that might be something more serious, or a delay in care. That's all high-risk stuff. In some sense, I guess, there's a bit of hesitation, because I don't want people to be fearful, but at the same time, I think maybe that can activate patients so that people don't just passively get their medical care, that they're educated, that they ask questions.

Something that we're going to do is promote health literacy. Kind of like an IQ, what's the health IQ of someone? Maybe the doctor's speaking in terms that this person would understand, but this person clearly can't. We have to tailor that and watch that. Those are all ... They all kind of fit together, but I don't want patients to be scared when we're talking about zero harm and a patient safety culture. Like, what? Did something happen?

Singsaas: Like, what's causing this? What prompted this?

Medical Group CC: Yeah.

Singsaas: What's interesting actually, is most of your social media interaction is through patient care and patients. Your command already has more than 600 people. If we think about it, you own the entire [local] community. You truly are reaching out to more than 57,000 active duty, dependents, and retirees. The medical group is one of the few organizations where you actually need to reach out to all of them in some way, shape, or form.

Medical Group CC: Yeah. We do.

Singsaas: In light of that, how would you define successful leadership communication for the medical group?

Medical Group CC: Good question. Probably in two parts. I think, 1, there's internal communication. Even that, we need to get better at that. We have an executive staff, and we talk about things, and then teams are supposed to filter down and go to the flight commanders and go all the way to the bottom. What we're kind of doing is we're starting to flip that over, and with high reliability, we took an airman, he just briefed today for the first time, Senior Airman, and he briefed high reliability to all enlisted and all officers.

Singsaas: Very cool.

Medical Group CC: I think grassroots is more powerful than I could be standing up there talking about these principles. I think we're thinking more about it. We're starting to have action, and then the next [step] is taking ... We've planted the seed. We have one airman, and then now we need to spread. He's leading up. He's an Airman, he's leading up. How awesome is that? That's internal communication.

External communication, and how would I know if they're getting it? For me, it's out and about in talking and just asking a question. Hey, what do you think is high reliability or trusted care? What does that mean to you? Because I can send emails out, and I just sent one out.

Singsaas: Me, too.

Medical Group CC: I sent one out, and instead of ... In the subject line, I put "Air Force Trusted CONOPS" and I was like, they're going to delete that, so I put "Where are we going?" So at least they'd open it. What is this about? Then I talked about it. But then it's going to be out talking with people. I think that's how we'll find out. Part of it, our beneficiaries is harder, harder to know what they're getting. I will tell you one thing, the beneficiaries here; I've never received so many emails or actual letters from patients that are telling me things.

Singsaas: Really?

Medical Group CC: Yeah. I had one patient; someone told her she should send me an email. She was asking about ... Again, this is ... You wouldn't be able to know who she was, because I'm not going to give you a name.

Singsaas: Even if you did, it's all going to be taken off the record.

Medical Group CC: She had a miscarriage, and when she left here, they were just kind of starting this program called Purple Wings. They had folders and information, and they called the patient several times to see how they're doing. She sent me an email, and she said, "You know what? After my miscarriage," I guess she actually had several, she said, "I was getting online. I was just kind of doing some research, and I noticed that maybe it'd be nice if there could be a little care package. I would like to talk with you about that." I brought her in. She's very young, maybe 23.

Singsaas: Oh, wow.

Medical Group CC: She's really young, but she had done her homework, and she wanted to help. I said, "Great. You know what? I'm going to hook you up with a nurse, and we're going to start these little care packages." Where it's just a little tea light and a tea bag and a poem, just something that somebody has a loss, give them something they can take with them.

Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Medical Group CC: That's from a patient. I guess, maybe being open and receptive, and hopefully she takes that and she spreads it, and she says, "I met with the group commander," and she'll tell someone, "You're having a problem? You should talk with someone." That we're receptive, that we'll take feedback. I've had a retiree send me an actual referral that had corrections all over it.

Part of it, the referral's because it's a computer software system that they lump things together, so some words get put together, and the dates aren't in military format, but this really bothered her, and she sent me a note on it. I called her, and she said ... She's 74. She said, "I used to work in a legal office, and I just thought this seems like a lot of mistakes that you shouldn't be sending out." I said, "I understand. The problem is we have this format, it's a software problem." The she understood.

Then another guy sent me a note and a letter talking about he's concerned about the security at the gate here, which I am, too. Then fourth, there was just another one the other day. I haven't gotten to him.

Singsaas: That's just in the last couple weeks.

Medical Group CC: Yeah. I think that's good. I think people aren't afraid to communicate. Are we reaching all of them? I don't know. That's tough.

Singsaas: Will we ever, though?

Medical Group CC: I don't think so. My care, that's another tool that we're using. Secure messaging.

Singsaas: Oh, I've used that.

Medical Group CC: Yeah. It's good. Some people ... I'm not a real techy person. If I can use it, anybody can use it.

Singsaas: That's all the time we have.

Medical Group CC: Okay.

Singsaas: Thank you so much. That was actually exactly what I was looking for to get that insight, and it's interesting to get the perspective from folks from different leadership backgrounds, because from the outside looking in, from the civilian world, you're a colonel in the Air Force, but really, if you take off the uniform, it's a background and all the experiences that's made you the leader that you are today, and it has a lot of different anecdotes that we can put into this research. Thank you very much, ma'am.

Medical Group CC: All right. That's interesting. I'd like to read it when you're done.

Singsaas: I'd love to.

*Appendix G***Interview Transcript****Operations Support Squadron Commander (Lieutenant Colonel)**

Singsaas: Thank you for participating as a critical component on this qualitative data collection. You've agreed to participate in a Creighton University dissertation study where your candid interview responses may be selected for inclusion in a final research publication. To ensure the utmost confidentiality your personal and professional identity will be masked to the general public from this point forward.

I'm going to begin with six questions that help to quantify your professional background. Then we'll just go into some open conversation. First, please state your rank and position.

Ops Support SQ/CC: Lieutenant Colonel and Commander of the Operations Support Squadron.

Singsaas: How many years of service do you have in the Air Force?

Ops Support SQ/CC: 18 1/2.

Singsaas: How old are you?

Ops Support SQ/CC: 41.

Singsaas: How long have you been in your current position?

Ops Support SQ/CC: For 19 months.

Singsaas: How many command tours have you completed including this one?

Ops Support SQ/CC: This is the only one, so just 1.

Singsaas: What is your primary career field?

Ops Support SQ/CC: Navigator.

Singsaas: How many Airmen are assigned within your organization?

Ops Support SQ/CC: 170 assigned to the unit, but we have administrative control of another 40 on group staff.

Singsaas: About 210 or so

Ops Support SQ/CC: Yeah, 210, 220

Singsaas: Since the start of this command tenure, describe an anecdote where you recognized the establishment of your personal leadership style.

Ops Support SQ/CC: That's a good one. Okay, probably within the first month of command there was a positive urinalysis that happened for one of the members on our group staff that was for a prescription drug that the individual had been prescribed, but according to the doctors the prescription was no longer valid. The initial assessment for security forces, and for the UA individuals was, "She's guilty of using prescription drugs without a valid prescription." Legal team did the same analysis, looked at everything, but then I did a personal interview with her and talked to her about what the situation was. She basically explained that she was under the impression that the drug was still valid. I ended up doing a bunch of phone calls within the medical group to get permission to talk specifically with the doctor. The doctor and I talked and the information he had relayed to security forces was not the full story.

He had looked back at his notes at the visits and determined, yeah this was very confusing. He had switched her meds 3 or 4 times, so she definitely has a leg to stand on here that she thought she was using the drugs appropriately. The whole moral of that story was being willing to listen to both sides of the story, and then ask questions if you weren't satisfied with the full story being told to make the decision. I think it definitely set the tone where I'm not afraid to take advisement from different organizations, but definitely ask questions to get the full story. I think that's probably the first one that pops out in my mind.

Singsaas: It's a big experience to have the first couple months.

Ops Support SQ/CC: Yes, exactly.

Singsaas: It's interesting how big the impact really can be for somebody and how you can be the single person that makes that impact positive or negative. Recalling this leadership development, how has that experience influenced your approach to interaction with your Airmen now?

Ops Support SQ/CC: I think it's a lot of consulting with First Sergeants and the Chief, and then really giving the Airmen a chance to talk and just interact

with them so I get an idea what they're thinking. It goes for the discipline stuff for sure, but just the day to day interaction is just trying to talk with guys and gals, and get an idea of what their situation is, how they're impacting the mission, what they're doing, where they think things can be improved. Really just asking questions and getting familiar with processes, and people, and better ways to do things.

Singsaas: What's your favorite way to communicate?

Ops Support SQ/CC: I think my favorite way is just talking to somebody versus using any type of electronic method.

Singsaas: What's your least favorite? What do you try never to do?

Ops Support SQ/CC: Never to do? I try not to just send an email without at least a phone call follow up, or trying to explain it at the next event. I think that's my least favorite, is just sending an email.

Singsaas: Mine too. Funny enough. How has your leadership style adapted to improve subordinate morale and welfare with the implementation of Facebook as a medium that the Air Force uses?

Ops Support SQ/CC: Let's see. Repeat it one more time?

Singsaas: Sure, how has your leadership style adapted to how the Air Force uses social media, and how have you incorporated that to improve morale and welfare?

Ops Support SQ/CC: Okay. I think Facebook; I think it's caused Air Force leaders in general to have to be able to explain things a little bit more. You've got both the public and private Facebook pages where people are commenting on different things that are going on in base, or in the unit. Knowing that that's out there, being able to field questions if there's anything that comes up in there, but also be able to tell the story on why things are happening, and how things are going on. Our squadron uses, we've got a very basic Facebook page that we use for our spouses that tries to disseminate some of that information and whatnot, but I still think a lot of times Facebook will just go off on a tangent based on a few people's comments where I think, just leadership wise, you've got to be able to kind of rein those thoughts in and explain what's really going on I guess.

Singsaas: It's like that personal aspect that you're saying.

Ops Support SQ/CC: Right.

Singsaas: You like to walk around. What are some of the social media avenues that you use on a professional level?

Ops Support SQ/CC: Probably just that spouses Facebook page. We use email, and texting, and that type of stuff, but nothing where I'm posting comments to anything, or presenting information that way.

Singsaas: Who manages that page?

Ops Support SQ/CC: First Sergeant has access to it, but it's really one of our key spouses has control of the page. They'll post, again, it's mainly just calendar type postings. "These are events coming up." Versus any type of policy or that type of stuff that goes out on that.

Singsaas: Not just for Airmen in the unit, but the whole OSS community. The families, that kind of thing.

Ops Support SQ/CC: Yep, correct.

Singsaas: Can you recall in the 19 months you've been in command an example where you've used that spouse page, and there's been a positive anecdote that's come out from it?

Ops Support SQ/CC: Probably publicizing our open house and squadron picnic. We do an open house in the spring and a squadron picnic in the summer. I think a lot of times information will stop with the military member, so we'll talk at a commander's call, or we'll send out an invite on email, but that doesn't make it home. I think reaching out to the spouses and the family members of people who were deployed, and then reaching out to the spouses and family members of people who just didn't bring the information home. We ended up getting some huge responses to both of those events that I think was bolstered by using the Facebook page versus just emails and talking at work about it.

Singsaas: Exactly. Throughout your whole career, social media's been around now at least for about the last 10 to 12 years. Can you think of an example that's been negative?

Ops Support SQ/CC: Nothing specific. I guess just looking at some of the Facebook pages here for; I think the snow line is a good example. The office Facebook page will bring up, it'll have whatever the wing commanders determination is on late reporting, and then people just pile on there. Some good comments, some needless

comments, and then just some real off the wall comments that are negative in nature. I think that's probably where I've seen it go awry, is just people thinking that they can comment however they want to a page. Maybe more inciting discontent versus just taking the information that was meant to be disseminated.

Singsaas: Makes sense. With as diverse as your organization is, it's arguably one of the most diverse on base really, how do you make sure that your communication is well received from all those different cultures within the unit?

Ops Support SQ/CC: I guess hitting the communication in different ways. We do a weekly flight commanders meeting, or flight chief meeting. We'll try to spread the vision that way. We try, both the DO and I, try to get out to every flight at least every week or every other week. We're sort of doing a face to face with whoever is on shift. We've had some success in coming in after hours to hit some of the after hour guys, but most of the flights, they'll shift between day and night. Eventually if we go out during the day we'll hit just about everybody. Those face-to-face meetings, I'll send out notes to the flight commanders kind of about what we talked about in the flight commander meeting so they have that. I encourage them to hold their flight meetings, or send out that information in an email to the squadron. I think that's probably the best description of the way we do it. Hit the same message multiple times, try to hit it in different ways, and try to get face to face when we can.

Singsaas: That almost truly is your personal leadership style. That walk around, demonstrated authenticity, where, "I say something in a meeting, but I will always back it up in person."

Ops Support SQ/CC: Right.

Singsaas: Where social media for you in your organization really isn't that primary avenue that some people might have. It's an avenue to go somewhere, or meet somewhere, or do something afterwards, always follow up.

Ops Support SQ/CC: Yep.

Singsaas: Okay.

Ops Support SQ/CC: That's good.

Singsaas: It's interesting to think that, if we're working at the leadership level, most folks are above the age 35, but really the majority of

the organization is really below the age of 25. How do you get suggestions to help communicate with that age group?

Ops Support SQ/CC: To get suggestions I think there's a lot of just the communication, talking with people. I think we get some of that. I guess outside the unit, I'm thinking a little bit the stuff that [the wing commander] has done recently with, I don't even know what you call it, where they can send in suggestions, or questions.

Singsaas: Ask FM.

Ops Support SQ/CC: Ask FM. I think that has been an effective thing on the wing level. People think they can ask questions with maybe not being embarrassed and standing up and asking the questions. But yeah, within the unit I guess stuff like that really hasn't come up so much. We just did our climate survey and people were happy with the way communication was kind of getting disseminated. They said there were a few roadblocks here and there, maybe at the tier below the flight commander. Your element chiefs or whatever, but there really hasn't been any suggestion about using social media to fix that or adjust it.

Singsaas: To help bridge that gap.

Ops Support SQ/CC: Or bridge that gap. I guess I don't have anything super specific with the unit, but I do think the stuff [the wing commander] is doing, that's an interesting way, and I think it's actually opening up a lot of communication from some of the younger Airmen that might not have stood up and asked a question.

Singsaas: Definitely.

Ops Support SQ/CC: I don't know if that would be effective on a squadron level quite as much because I think you lose a little bit of the anonymity that you get with a big organization, but yeah.

Singsaas: Some folks say that social media is the new form of face-to-face communication. How does your leadership style change if you use social media to communicate within your organization? And does it?

Ops Support SQ/CC: I think you'd have to be a lot. If that was the sole way of doing it you'd have to be a lot more careful on how you phrase things, what words you used to actually get the same message across. I think if it was going to be a sole communication thing, or the main communication thing, I think I would definitely have to probably

think harder and longer of how I was going to phrase things to get it out. If I was using it as more of the supplement, which is what I do now, I think there's still some of that, but any perceived miscommunication, or the wrong message, you can pretty much quickly correct if you actually talk face to face with somebody.

Singsaas: It's tough to convey tone.

Ops Support SQ/CC: Yeah. Exactly.

Singsaas: How do you define successful leadership communication?

Ops Support SQ/CC: Okay. I think to be successful you have to get whatever point is across. I think it needs to be in a fashion where the majority of people are going to understand what the message is and they're not going to have to determine it on their own. It's broken down in a simple enough fashion where there's not going to be, I guess, interpretation on an individual's part. Successfully communicating is being able to phrase it in a simple manner, make sure that it's easily communicate-able, and then easily received by the individual. Probably those three pieces. You kind of have to think about, "If I say it in this way, how would the majority of the people actually receive it?" That can help you adjust your message a little bit.

Singsaas: Given the opportunity to change one aspect of Air Force social media, big Air Force, describe how your lessons learned in your career, how you might use those to offer suggestions to improve it.

Ops Support SQ/CC: I think the, maybe the feedback loop. I think a lot of times stuff within social media, and I'm probably leaning a little bit towards the email type messages that come down from higher ups is that there's not the feedback loop, or the way to make sure timely information is coming down. If there was some way to maybe have a somewhat standardized distribution, and then a way with the distribution of the messages where you could have, I guess, a somewhat standardized feedback piece, and then you could make sure the information was timely and updated all the time.

I'm thinking specifically maybe about the enlisted evaluation system. We're going through all those changes now so we're getting updates via email, via posting on the website, via PSDM's coming down, via other aspects coming out. The local FSS (Force Support Squadron) sending out their things. You come to a point where you don't know where the information's coming from, what's the most current information, and it's just not delivered in a

standardized way. Probably, I think, that would be the 1 thing I would fix. If there's a way to standardize it and consolidate it, and maybe have it come down a specific way.

Singsaas: Last question. I think you really keyed in on how that face-to-face authentic leadership is really your leadership style. What's unique about your organization is how diverse it is so you almost have to do that, but it actually is tailored to your strength. Think about how, if you were in a position, maybe 5, 10 years from now, military or otherwise, an organization with 500, 1,000 people that were geographically separated, how would you try and convey that same leadership style to an organization like that?

Ops Support SQ/CC: Yeah. If you go to 500 or 1,000 it's definitely a lot more people so it takes out the ability to do as much walking around. I think you'd still have to do a combination of emails and face to face, but the face to face might be more of a, could be a video message, or a teleconference type message where people have the ability to talk to you and figure out, or ask questions about the message or changes, but I would probably not have the ability to go office to office and do that type of thing. I would think some type of combination of the face to face. I would say in that case, with a big organization, it's going to be probably a lot of face to face with the middle managers and then conveying the need for them to go out and do face to face with all the worker bees. Probably communicating it that way versus me directly to the worker bees.

Singsaas: How could you bridge that generation gap? What are some different ways you might try and do that?

Ops Support SQ/CC: Again, I think something like [the wing commander] has done, where maybe it's an application on a smart phone, or some type of web page feedback, or something like that where maybe communicating with them on something they're comfortable communicating on. You can definitely see the young Airmen love doing the texting and all that stuff a lot more than, I think, people my age do. I think looking for technology, or aspects that would connect to them that way. I think there could be, especially in a larger organization, avenues like the Facebook, or a Facebook like page where people could comment, and post, and that type of thing. We talked about some of the pitfalls of that too. It has to be somewhat controlled, but not controlled to the point where people don't think they can actually have input or interact with you too.

Singsaas: All right. Thank you very much.

*Appendix H***Interview Transcript****Communications Squadron Commander (Lieutenant Colonel)**

- Singsaas: Please state your rank and position for the record.
- COMM SQ/CC: My rank is Lieutenant Colonel. My position is Commander of the XX Communications Squadron at (Air Force Base in Midwest United States).
- Singsaas: How many years of service do you have in the Air Force?
- COMM SQ/CC: I have 19 years and 6 months.
- Singsaas: How old are you?
- COMM SQ/CC: I am 47.
- Singsaas: How long have you been in your current position?
- COMM SQ/CC: I have been in my current position since June 15, 2014, so about a year and a half.
- Singsaas: How many command tours have you completed including this one?
- COMM SQ/CC: I've completed one command tour; however, there was debate and discussion about giving me command credit for leading 34 teams of females in Afghanistan.
- Singsaas: How long were you in that position for?
- COMM SQ/CC: I was in that position for 14 months.
- Singsaas: What is your primary career field?
- COMM SQ/CC: My primary career field is communications.
- Singsaas: How many Airmen are assigned within your organization?
- COMM SQ/CC: I have 147 Airmen, but my organization is 225 people, of which I have one contractor.

Singsaas: Now that that's complete, thank you for participating in this critical component of this qualitative data collection. You have agreed to participate in a Creighton University dissertation study where your candid interview responses may be selected for inclusion in a final research publication. To insure the utmost confidentiality, your personal and professional identity will be masked to the general public from this point forward. Now, may I ask you a few questions?

COMM SQ/CC: Okay.

Singsaas: Since the start of your command tenure, describe an anecdote where you recognized the establishment of your personal leadership style.

COMM SQ/CC: For me, personally, one of the biggest things, and I think this is important, you need to put yourself out there and let your Airmen know who you are. That's not who you think that you should be, but who you actually are. Window dressing doesn't work. Airmen see right through it. In the different ways in which I've done that, is the things that I like to do on my personal time, I have invited the entire squadron with. For example, about twice a year, I rent the (Local) Arena Skating Rink. I rent an hour and a half of ice time. Everybody, it's an alternate duty location. Everybody goes. They can bring their kids or their spouses or their significant others and we ice skate.

The reason why this is one of the things that's probably unique to me, is I used to be a figure skater and, throughout college, a skating instructor. It's been very well received. Everybody looks forward to it. It's one of those things where, "Commander doesn't just do 'X'. Commander has other things that she does well." That's one thing.

The other thing is, I get into their space. If they invite me to something, I go. I've been to several Tae Kwon Do tournaments. I've been to several family gatherings. When people have parents come to town, we go to lunch. I think there's an important element to getting to know your Airmen but not like in the way that people always talk about because people all talk about, "Get to know your Airmen. Sit them down. Ask them if they have brothers and sisters." That's not enough. That's good, I mean, but it's not sufficient. I think necessary, but not sufficient.

I think there has to be an investment of your time to make them feel valued. That's me, personally. That works for me. It might

not work for other people, but it works for me. Everybody knows where I live, because they'll go to (Local) Town Center. My apartment is the one right under the clock tower. Everybody's like, "Yes, I got Christmas lights on." Or, they'll be down at Nebraska Brewing Company and I'll receive a text from an Airmen going, "I see your balcony. Are you home?" I'll be, "No, I'm not home."

Everybody knows where I live, what my life is about. What I'm about after work is what I'm about at work. It doesn't change. I think consistency on who you are is very important. You can't pretend that you're all high and mighty at work and then, have this secret weird life that is in direct conflict of who you are at work.

Singsaas: It falsifies who you are.

COMM SQ/CC: Absolutely. Sometimes, I lose my temper on things and you shouldn't. Absolutely shouldn't. As a leader, you should not, but I get upset about "How come our network vulnerabilities aren't going down? I've been trying to work on this for six months. I don't get it." That's the extent of it, but none of my emotions or actions are fake. They're absolutely real. Everybody knows that that's what I really mean. I'm not going to be like, "Oh, good job." Then, go back to my office, shut the door, and say, "I can't believe that person's doing that." I think it's very important to be genuine. The person you're going to get here is the person you're going to get there. What I tell you is a genuine remark. Good, bad, or indifferent. I also believe in, I think, the ... "She's now Commander, Pacific Air Forces, General..."

Singsaas: Laurie Robertson.

COMM SQ/CC: Yes.

COMM SQ/CC: She always talks about the "Be frank with your people. It doesn't do anybody any good to not be completely frank. If you have an Airmen who is going down a path. Sit him down and go, 'Look, you're going down a path.' You are not as good as you think you are right now. We can help you to be better, but you've got to let us." Be frank. I think what she talks about when she talks about with, because the new EPR [Enlisted Performance Report] system, new OPR [Officer Performance Report] system, the new rack and stack, it depends on your supervisor being frank with you. If your supervisor's not frank with you that whole system is not going to work, which takes a certain amount of fortitude to tell somebody they're not very good.

It's awesome to tell people they're awesome. Sit them down and go, "You're doing great." That's why I tell my deputy and I tell my civilian deputy and even my chief, I give feedback every day. Every single day. There's a joke that I draw a line down the white board in the conference room. "You know, Chief, you're on this side today." But, every day's a new day. Constant feedback that's honest and every day is a new day. You give people an opportunity to excel.

For success, holding grudges does no good. Doesn't do any good in the development of your people or the development of the mission. If something goes wrong, you talk about it. You're like, "I can't believe you did that, but I can see where you might have. It's not your best day, so you're on this side of the line, but tomorrow's a new day and we'll get after it."

Singsaas: Where did you learn that trait?

COMM SQ/CC: It's interesting, because I've been afforded that coming up by some of the folks that I've worked for. I've had some bad bosses too. I mean, not as many bad ones as good ones, thank God. For a while there, and I think about this a lot. For a while there, when you're a Lieutenant, things are a little rough. I don't think I would have survived in today's Air Force because it took me those four years to get my feet under me and figure out expectations and everything. I mean, when I came in, I was a little older. I was 28 years old. I always seemed to have a good boss, then a bad boss, then a good boss, then a bad boss, up until I was a Major. Then, it seemed like there was one last bad boss when I was a new Major, and then, there, something changed. They all became good bosses.

I think what happens is, you stay in, you start wearing the shoes of the bosses you had before. You start looking back at maybe why they did x, y, and z and why you thought maybe that was bad. "Okay, well, I understand where they're coming from now, because now I'm wearing their shoes." Because that bad boss was a Major or that bad boss was a Captain. I used to think when I was a Lieutenant that the meanest rank in the Air Force was Major. I used to think that.

Then, I put on Major, and I was like, "Okay, I can kind of see ... No style points." They're just trying to get stuff done. They need you to help out but they have no style points. There's ways to get people to do things but I think, when you're a Major, being a Major is very critical of rank. When you're a Major, that's that time period in which you figure out how to pound a square peg into a

round hole or get somebody to pound their own square peg into a round hole.

Singsaas: That's very true.

COMM SQ/CC: I think, when you're a Major, you're developing a style or you're trying to figure out how to finesse getting ugly projects done in the most copacetic way with people thinking that it was their idea, kind of deal. As a Lieutenant Colonel, it feels like almost instantly overnight, it's really different. I know when you put Major on it feels a little different, as you probably know. Then, when you put Lieutenant Colonel on, it's even way different. You eat in a different part of the dining hall, kind of different.

COMM SQ/CC: You really are they, at that point. When you're a Major, you're kind of "they".

Singsaas: Like a halfway house, in some ways.

COMM SQ/CC: Yes. I think that's why, as a Lieutenant, I thought that Major was the meanest rank ever. When you start moving up, you start looking back. I think it's important to look back, because if you don't reflect on things that have happened, things that have been done to you, or things that you've done to other people, you don't grow. I know everybody talks about, "Looking forward", and planning. I think it's almost as important to reflect on past assignments, past significant emotional events in your career.

Back to your original question, which I'm sorry I'm going like this...

Singsaas: This is fantastic.

COMM SQ/CC: Recently, I came back from Afghanistan after that 14-month tour with the Army. If you know anything about the Army, they're very different in their leadership style.

Singsaas: Right.

COMM SQ/CC: They do this thing called "false motivation". You have to pretend like you're having a good time when it's raining and you have a 100-pound pack on and people are yelling at you. You're like, "Yeah! It's fun!" Three hours into it, it switches and it becomes fun because it's comical. Their leadership style is very much square peg, round hole. That's what gets respect. Anger gets respect. Forcefulness gets respect. Asserting yourself as the alpha, gets

respect in the Army. That's how you lead in the Army. That's how you move up.

Air Force is completely different, for better or worse. I mean, there's some good things about that and there's some bad things and there are some good things about the Air Force leadership style as a corporation, that's good and bad. I believe the Air Force treats people with a lot more dignity and respect. Not that the Army doesn't treat people with dignity and respect, but it's across the board, less dignity, less respect, across the board. It's not even one group or person or whatever. Its just people don't matter as much as they do in the Air Force.

Singsaas: It's a palpable culture difference.

COMM SQ/CC: It is. I think maybe because we're smaller. Every person counts. It's like every person matters. People have to be used to their full extent because we have to stay relevant. The Air Force is a little different, but, after that time in the Air Force, I came over to PACAF (Pacific Air Forces), and I was working for a guy named Colonel [name removed]. He did a lot of Air Force Special Operations stuff over in South Africa, type of deal.

He's an amazing man. He makes everybody feel valued and it's just by being in the room. I think part of it is, he's got such an even personality. It's like, "No sweat. You know what? Something went wrong. We'll use it as a training event, just recover and go from there." There was no repercussion. Punishment for honest mistakes for trying to do good work. I think that's a big deal, I believe. I believe. Nobody comes to work and says, "Well, I'm going to take down the network today."

Singsaas: Right.

COMM SQ/CC: "Screw those guys. Take my stapler and light the building on fire." I think people do things because they think they're going to do good work and third and fourth order effects they didn't think about, that person who did that thing, has become smarter. Because if they never made any mistakes, then we would never move forward, at all. It goes back to Colonel [name removed], big deal, Colonel [name removed], who's now the "Mister [name removed]", down at [Air Force Major Command]?

COMM SQ/CC: He was the A6 at PACAF at that time. Also, somebody who gave you free reign to do stuff. I think that's important. That was at a time period in which I had to recover from the Army thing. It

swung this way. It took me about six months to be like, "Oh, they really aren't going to get mad at me." Before I started moving out. Going all the way back before, and that's to before I joined the Air Force, figure skating. I was at a level in which I was nationally ranked. Part of that, my coaches and everything else, I take this with me throughout my whole career, is if you aren't failing, because I think failure is something that is important. It's important to do. If you've never failed, you need to go do it, because if you've never failed, that tells me you are not doing things hard enough for you. That's great. You never failed, whatever.

Why don't you go out and do something that you failed at because you're not reaching high enough? If you go out and skate a program in competition and you've never, ever fell, that means you're not doing things hard enough for you. It's the same thing in life. You've done a few of my applications.

Singsaas: Sure.

COMM SQ/CC: You know, I didn't get picked up. You fail. That's an important lesson to try to do things that are probably you're not good enough for or was out of your reach. Secondly, is what do you do after you fail?

Singsaas: Apply again.

COMM SQ/CC: Apply again.

Singsaas: With a better application.

COMM SQ/CC: That's the same thing with everything. What do you do after you fail? Say, we try to do something to the network here and it doesn't work out quite right. You try to do something that didn't work. It didn't turn out quite right. You figure out what you did wrong and you try again. Sometimes, it costs you a little bit of money. Sometimes, it costs you a little bit of time. The people that are working on this project, they're in this problem together and you don't quit. That was from my skating days, which carried me over to Assessment and Selection for the Army Special Forces. First Air Force female to do that. I'm older than everybody. I was 43 at the time.

Singsaas: Oh, wow!

- COMM SQ/CC: The first event is an 18-mile ruck march, which is great. I knew that was kind of coming. I didn't know how long it was, but then they give me a M-16, which in the Air Force, you never carry. It's a very heavy weapon.
- Singsaas: Lengthwise, considering your height.
- COMM SQ/CC: Right. Being five feet tall, and having this very ... There's no sling. No sling and you can't carry it by the handle. They have a handle on the top that's like a purse.
- Singsaas: Right.
- COMM SQ/CC: Like, "Oh! I've got a purse gun." No, can't hold it like that. So, for the first 10 miles, I busied myself with trying to figure out how to carry the darn thing. Being in the Air Force, "I didn't plan for this. Oh, shit! What now?" You go with it. Flexibility. When you're presented a problem, be flexible. Don't quit. Don't worry about failing. Don't plan to fail, at all. Don't be like, "Well, I'm going to try this, but I'm not going to be able to do it." Be realistic, and don't plan to fail. If you're continually having success, then you're not doing stuff hard enough because some of my folks here, they try to do things and they fail. I'm like, "Good, what are you going to do now?"
- Singsaas: Exactly.
- COMM SQ/CC: It's okay. I think we've grown a generation of young people. They've grown up in a culture in which everybody gets a trophy. Everybody's awesome. Everybody's the same. That's great. It's nice to give kids confidence, but, as a parent, I would say, "Well, let's try something where you're competing against yourself and you might not reach that goal."
- Rock climbing, for instance. Something like that, because we've gotten a bunch of kids, who the first time they fail, like a CDC (Career Development Course) test, it's a suicide incident. It's such a massive crisis for them that their life is over. It's like, "Look, it happens! I'm not going to kick you out, but you're going to do it again."
- Singsaas: I'm actually liking this more that you care that much.
- COMM SQ/CC: Yeah. We don't need to go to mental health. If you want to, go ahead, but that's not how this is going to be solved. Down the road, you will be better because of this failure. What are you

going to do when your troop fails? Are you going to say, "Oh, it's over. Your life is over." No. You have to be able to give them some sort of ... If your life is easy, you're going to have a more difficult time leading people because people have things that they carry with them. I think failure's important.

Singsaas: You've touched on authentic leadership and reflection, which are huge components of some really successful leadership styles. My next question actually ties into all the things you've just mentioned. Recalling all these leadership developments, how have they influenced your approach to professional interaction with Airmen in your unit? Can you describe an interaction that utilized social media?

COMM SQ/CC: Yes. First of all I think it's important when you sit in this chair, you have to be eternally optimistic. I just want to mention that optimism is important. As far as leadership and interacting with my troops and social media, I do have a Facebook site. I do have a LinkedIn site. I have something else that is surprisingly more effective than both of those. That's Pinterest.

Singsaas: Oh yeah. Sure.

COMM SQ/CC: Which, I know, you're probably going, "What? How is that?" Here's how Pinterest is important. I pin books I'm reading. I pin workouts I'm doing. I pin gear that I'm using for my workouts. I pin food service. I use a couple of food services around town, like [local restaurant]. I pin things they might want to try on this Pinterest site. It's interesting, because they can go look at that without me knowing they're looking at my stuff, which I think, young Airmen don't want me to know what they're doing. I know they're doing it, because they'll bring up items that are on that site.

Singsaas: Right.

COMM SQ/CC: I think they like Pinterest better than Facebook. If they're a friend of mine on Facebook I can see their stuff unless they go in there and have to manage it. I know a lot of the young Airmen; they don't like to have to manage. They like to be able to just barf their stuff out there and not have to manage each person. It's funny, because my civilian population, which is generally older, they're friends of mine on Facebook. Look at your population. My older population likes Facebook. They will interact with me on Facebook and Facebook messenger.

My younger people like Pinterest. Younger people also like Instagram. I've been requested to be on Snapshot but I won't do Snapshot. I think if you're going to say it and it's going to be out there, it needs to be out there. That's like you don't want to own up to something. It's none of my business. The Pinterest thing, I interact with a lot of folks in my squadron that I wouldn't normally interact with on it and it's not a, "I know I'm interacting with you." It's out there. This is things of how I'm living my life and the things that I'm looking at, the things I'm reading, or, I'll pin an article that I see about something on there. Someone will mention it. I don't make a thing of it, because then they'll stop doing it, but I know they're looking at it.

Singsaas: Is there an example where you purposely used a form of social media to convey a vision you have or a movement you'd like to make professionally?

COMM SQ/CC: The Pinterest stuff with the fitness thing is big, but, if it's important to me, I don't use social media. Right now, we're doing climate assessment stuff, talking about the climate assessment briefings, which they're small groups. They generally end up talking about nothing about climate assessment. I think it's important that I try to hit work centers on a weekly basis and go, "Hey! Got any questions about anything? What's on your mind?" "Well, this is what I'm thinking about." Then I say, "Don't hold me to it, but I think it would be cool if we can do 'x'." I'll just spit things out and, sometimes, someone will come back and go, "Hey! I was thinking about what you said and maybe we could try this." Like the hard drives. The hard drive deal?

Singsaas: I do.

COMM SQ/CC: Significant emotional event for all of you guys. I'm also thinking about, because we have flying squadrons here that have students. This hard drive thing cut them off at the knees. The (Navy Component) doesn't care what our actual mission is. Apparently, they only care about what their mission is. I've said to the guys, "Hey, is there a way?" eTools does for maintenance, right?

Singsaas: Interesting.

COMM SQ/CC: We're trying to work through some stuff, but we are looking at ... Back to your vision, or whatever, things that are a personal vision, like for the greater good of the whole world. I'll put on Pinterest or whatever. I'll be like, "This is an easy way to recycle." Things for the actual mission or things are actually important, really important

to actually do, I will do face-to-face. My Airmen like to see people face-to-face. They may not like to see their supervisor face-to-face, but they like to see the Chief or myself. They will talk to us. Kids these days are different than I was growing up. I would never talk to my Commander. I'd see him and I'd go running the other way. I get the "Hey!"

I'll be out at Target. They want to talk to me about something. If I'd see my boss at Target, I would have been running down the other aisle. I'd be like, "Oh my God! I don't want to talk to them." That's like Colonel [name removed] (Former Group Commander) last year had made the statement, "If anybody doesn't have any place to go, they can come to my house for Thanksgiving." Well, a few Airmen showed up at his house.

Singsaas: Which is awesome.

COMM SQ/CC: Which is really great. They stayed there like most of the night. The colonel said, "Yeah, it just surprised me." He was really happy about it. He was, "I'm just surprised anybody showed up." I think they're a little different than they used to be. The boundaries ... Maybe social media has done that, but some of the boundaries are a little different, for better or worse.

Singsaas: Perhaps, it's humanized. Like you were saying at the very beginning, it gives you authenticity.

COMM SQ/CC: I think that's important. Going to the Tae Kwon Do tournaments and stuff. You can't just go and sit in the bleachers. You have to go and be obnoxious and cheer. Then, they won't ask you again.

Singsaas: Given the opportunity to change one aspect of Air Force level social media, would your lessons learned offer insight to improving communication?

COMM SQ/CC: I think we put too much trust in social media to do stuff. It's great for certain things, but anything that's important has to have a human factor. That's my take on it. As far as the Air Force trying to improve things through social media, things like information or shaping information, such as big policy deals, they should probably use social media for those things, but they can't wait too long to put information out. That's what the problem, I see is, with all those things.

The fact that the Air Force isn't going to force shape for the time being. I'm still getting questions about that. "Where is it on social

media?" They get their information from John Q. Public and the Air Force Times. That's not official. We should be able to put our information out faster than those two sites and we don't. Put it out there. I'm a journalism major, by trade.

COMM SQ/CC: Go early. Go often. If it turns out, that with our EPR (Enlisted Performance Report) system, that you have to correct along the way, do it. It goes back to the whole, "Don't be afraid of making it perfect. Don't be afraid of failing." The 60% solution is better than the 100% solution, three days late. I always use the phrase, "Don't worry, be crappy." Just be done.

COMM SQ/CC: Just be done. That's my feedback to big Air Force is that they're too slow and maybe it's because of big Air Force.

COMM SQ/CC: They're too slow and they're too afraid. That's the other thing. People are afraid of saying or doing things. I can see why. I mean, you'll get Hilary Clinton with a mail server and this-and-that. If that was a military member, she'd be going to jail. I understand where she's coming from. I understand why she did it. Was it right? No, but I understand why she did it. That's the thing, do you take a risk and get it done, or does fear paralyze you? I get asked a lot, "Oh, you're going to have to talk to the Wing Commander about that. If you do that..." I'm like, "Okay. I own everything I'm doing. If I have to be afraid of telling the Wing Commander about something, then I shouldn't be doing it."

Own it. If it is a mistake, I think the Wing Commander can probably appreciate the intent. If it turns out awesome, then you just did everybody a favor by getting it done. It's like that hard drive thing. I understand what the (Navy Unit) was going for, because they were doing the "Don't worry, be crappy. Just get it done." They pulled the plug on the whole Air Force. I can appreciate that. Style point, not so good, but guess what, it's done now. They didn't drag it out for two years. It's done.

Singsaas: The greater impact of it is people forgot about it because it was yesterday.

COMM SQ/CC: Yep. Absolutely. That's the thing I can always count on, if you make a mistake. Someone else is going to make a worse mistake tomorrow. It's like having siblings. What else you got?

Singsaas: You've actually had a lot of assignments in very dynamic locations, different commands, different branches of the Armed Forces, even. Based on all that experience, in what way has the

use of Facebook or any social media platform improved the way information is disseminated among your Airmen today and the Airmen you've worked with in the past?

COMM SQ/CC: It hasn't made any difference. I think, in fact, this place here, Offutt, is the only place I know of that actually uses it to put certain announcements that actually gets looked at. Every place else I've been, nah. SOCOM (Special Operations Command) had a page, but it wasn't social media, but it was a page in which you could go to, to get information that was pretty good, if you were within the SOCOM command. They had everything on there from language training opportunities to personal trainers donating their time. Special Operations specific stuff that everybody in command was eligible for, not just operators. It was fantastic, but it was SharePoint driven, Special Operations specific stuff, to include then, a page you can sell your crap on, which probably isn't completely legal.

Singsaas: But, it works.

COMM SQ/CC: But, it works. You know how SOCOM is. They're extremely effective because they're light. They're lethal. They're a honey badger. They don't care. If it's going to work, they do it. Even if they think it might work, they do it. If it doesn't work, then they shift. An organization like that, there's a lot to learn from them. They can take an idea from the field. They can procure it and field it within 90 days. That's amazing. 90 days to the operator's hands in Afghanistan. I know that's the case because I did field a piece of equipment. It's incredible to watch this whole cycle go.

Now, if I was to do that here, and I've been trying to do it here with the Kindle procurement.

Singsaas: The Kindle?

COMM SQ/CC: And, the Kindle, it'll take years. It will take years. I think that's shrinking the OODA (Observe, Orient, Decide, Act) loop, is key. Social medial doesn't necessarily shrink the OODA loop. It can be a part of it, but it's not the panacea for all communication ills.

Singsaas: How would you critique the statement that the major benefit of social media, used in a professional environment, is humanizing authentic leadership?

COMM SQ/CC: No. I disagree, because that machine isn't human. I can have you sit down there and go, "Hey! Put my post up there for me." They don't know who it's coming from, for real. No.

Singsaas: In some cases, it's not even the person.

COMM SQ/CC: Right.

Singsaas: It goes through like a...

COMM SQ/CC: PA (Public Affairs) does all the posts for here. It's not [the wing commander]. I mean everybody knows that. I mean everybody knows I do my own posts because, if you notice, I don't have a secretary. I don't have crap for a front staff.

Singsaas: You don't.

COMM SQ/CC: I don't have a secretary. For the first year of my command, I didn't have a DO (Director of Operations) or a civilian DO. It was just me and an A1C (Airman First Class). We kicked butt. Social media, by the very term, is not human. It's social media. It is not human interaction. Right now, I'm talking to you. I'm seeing you. Even if it this was a VTC (Video Teleconference), it would be different. It'd be better than social media, but it would be different. There's an energy that you get from people.

Singsaas: Two professionals enjoying a conversation over coffee, really.

COMM SQ/CC: Yeah. Social media is good for "Report late two hours. This is a snow shoveling crew that's on today. We're having an event at the BX." It's a bulletin board for information, yes, but you can't mentor somebody over Facebook. You might be able to mentor somebody over messenger. It'd still be difficult. You might be able to mentor someone over email, but nothing replaces this. Maybe I'm old-fashioned, but my Airmen will tell you, that we want to see the Commander more. No matter how much I show up, they will always give the feedback, "We want to see the Commander more. We want to ask them questions." They want to be able to do that. They're the most social media savvy group of people ever. I think they recognize social media as for a place to barf out things.

My opinion, I know some people try to lead through social media, but it's a place to barf out ideas, but it's just that, is barfing out ideas. I mean I listen to TED Talks. The TED Talk podcast because they have new ones every day. That's another thing that's

on Pinterest. Here's a link to something that's cool. Okay. There's no context with it on social media.

Singsaas: Perfect. It actually leads up to my last question. How would you define successful leadership communication?

COMM SQ/CC: Okay, successful leadership communication happens when someone who's in a perceived position of power talks to the people that work for them. You have that dynamic. I never like to say I have people that work for me. I work with them.

Singsaas: You actually work for them, really.

COMM SQ/CC: I do. I tell them that they work for each other, since they're paying taxes. I talk about taxpayer money all the time. "My mother would be mad if they knew you were taking a half a day off." As far as successful, if your desired action or outcome is achieved through the communication which you're having, then you've achieved it. I don't know any mission that is achieved via Facebook. When you mission-plan, you have to have email and everything else, but what do you do? You have a bunch of guys that sit around the table and you talk about your role. Okay, the aircraft commander talks and they lead the discussion. What are you doing? Everybody has a piece. Everybody understands their piece. How is that achieved? That's achieved by mission planning, around a table, in person.

I think there can be things leading up to it. Social media is probably not useful for it, but leading up to it, you prep. Everybody's got to know where they fit. How do they know where they fit? Well, they fit by having someone describe what they're supposed to be doing. When you actually do a mission or have an actual outcome that you have to achieve, you sit down beforehand, and go, "Okay, you got this? You got that?" I mean, when you mission plan, everybody's got a role. You have one person that they answer to, even when you get on the jet. That one person's in charge, regardless of rank or whatever. They have a responsibility.

Singsaas: Right.

COMM SQ/CC: Everybody who is "under" that person understands their responsibility to that piece of that puzzle. I think that's the important part. I think that's where sometimes you fail when you're a non-operator in the Air Force is how do you instill on your infrastructure guy that he is the navigator of the base. That is his role. You look him in the eye and go, "This is where we need to

go. This is what your role is. You figure out. I'm putting it on you to figure out how you're going to get from A to B because I need you to do that. " I know a little bit about infrastructure, but I don't know what he knows about infrastructure.

As far as successful communication, I'm really not sure social media has a play. You can say, "We're going to meet at this time" on social media, but after that, you've got to sit down and hash it out. As you know too, on social media, as well as emails and everything else, your tone or who you are, it doesn't come out. It's words on a page.

COMM SQ/CC:

You don't get that this person is actually really a cool person to hang out with or the airport test, which is what you always do at SOCOM when you pick your teams to go out and do stuff. "Oh, that person would fail the airport test." If you have a long TDY (Temporary Duty) that's a lot of airports and everything else, you're bound to get stuck at one. Are you going to be able to tolerate being with this guy for three days at an airport in Ethiopia? Or, is he going to drive you freaking crazy. You can't tell that over email. Or, this person has a lot more to offer than their biography says or the emails that's coming through. You don't know that until you interact with them, because they might be quiet. They might be shy. They might be something, but you didn't know that they knew how to build tractors back home in Iowa. Oh my God! Is that useful when you're stuck in the middle of nowhere such-and-such.

Human interaction is never going to be replaced by a machine. It's just not. It may be important and a force multiplier, as far as like closing that OODA loop, but it's not going to be replace sitting down like this.

Singsaas:

I completely agree.

COMM SQ/CC:

Okay. I know I've got strong opinions about social media. It takes a lot to maintain. Sometimes my time would be better spent talking to a person than updating a post. If you've looked at my social media site, there's not a lot of stuff on there. You know what? My time, I'm not spent going like this. I'd rather do this. As you get older and for anybody else who's older, putting posts on social media becomes very, very difficult because you have to do it on your phone and you can't see your phone. You have to find your glasses. You can't read it. You've got to find your glasses. It's a pain in the ass.

- Singsaas: That was perfect. I think really the capstone of your conversation we've had this morning is it's the deliverable and the interaction that matters most.
- COMM SQ/CC: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)
- Singsaas: In the past, social media has been used by some as the deliverable.
- COMM SQ/CC: And, it's not. It's not. Okay, being a COMM squadron commander, I would like to like to offer that my job here on base isn't even important. I give you a tool. Everybody wigs out when the tool doesn't work.
- Singsaas: That's right.
- COMM SQ/CC: You should be able to do your job without my tool.
- Singsaas: I've heard some leaders will actually shut down the network and see what happens.
- COMM SQ/CC: At SOCOM, once a month, we had a no email day. You were allowed to send emails outside of SOCOM, but the six, the J6 there, had to provide Admiral Olsen a log on the following Monday of who sent emails internally. They had to report to the Admiral's office. Yeah. It had some teeth to it. There was one of two things that happened on that day. Many people took leave when they were told they couldn't email. Some people just came and then left early. Other people surfed the web. There was a portion of folks that did talk to people that they didn't usually talk to.
- If you look at SOCOM and what one of their tenets is, humans are more important than machines. That's true. It's absolutely true. They invest in people, not machines, because you can't grow or you can't go and buy a [Special Forces] operator. You have to grow them. A big thing for them is exactly what we're talking about. You develop countries through relationships. You don't develop countries through social media. It's the same thing with leadership because developing a country is a leadership aspect. That's all I got for you.
- Singsaas: Perfect. Thank you so much for doing this, this morning.
- COMM SQ/CC: I hope that was helpful.
- Singsaas: It really was.

*Appendix I***Interview Transcript****Comptroller Squadron Commander (Lieutenant Colonel)**

Singsaas: These first questions will quantify information about who you are without the ability to associate responses to your identity. Please state your rank and position for the record.

Comptroller Sq CC: Lieutenant Colonel, Commander, [Unit Number] Comptroller Squadron.

Singsaas: How many years of service do you have in the Air Force?

Comptroller Sq CC: A little over 25.

Singsaas: How old are you?

Comptroller Sq CC: 43.

Singsaas: How long have you been in your current position?

Comptroller Sq CC: A little over a year and a half.

Singsaas: How many command tours have you completed, to include this one?

Comptroller Sq CC: Two.

Singsaas: What is your primary career field?

Comptroller Sq CC: Finance.

Singsaas: How many Airmen are assigned within your current organization?

Comptroller Sq CC: I think its right about 30.

Singsaas: Since the start of this command tenure, describe an anecdote where you recognized the establishment of your personal leadership style.

Comptroller Sq CC: Okay. Probably when I first found out I was going to be a commander just thinking back to the commanders I've had in the past and thinking about things that I liked, things that I didn't like and then trying to take those traits and say, "Okay, this is what I

want to try to do when I get into that position" so I don't know that there's any one specific game plan.

Singsaas: Or turning point.

Comptroller Sq CC: Or turning point, but I knew I was going to be a commander about six months before I went out to do it so I had a lot of time to think about it and I talked to a lot of other folks and commanders and got advice on different things, but also understanding I am who I am, my personality is my personality and trying to use that in conjunction with all these other things that I've heard and advice people are giving me to set that tone for the kind of leader that I would like to be and that I strive to be.

Singsaas: What's one aspect that you always try to fall back on as the cornerstone for your leadership style?

Comptroller Sq CC: To try to feel like I'm approachable and all of the people can come and talk to me if they have issues. I'm not really one that likes to discuss and sort things out over email. I would rather sit face to face and discuss because you can get feedback, verbal and nonverbal, right away so letting people know or helping people to feel that I'm approachable. They can talk to me.

Singsaas: During this command tour, is there an example that you have or maybe it's a commander's call or a message you've sent out to folks when they first arrive in your unit that you try to convey that level of approachability that you try to maintain?

Comptroller Sq CC: My very first commander's call when I got here I told people, "My door is always open to you if you have a problem and you don't feel comfortable talking to anybody in your chain of command you can always come talk to me." I encourage people to try to solve problems at the lowest level because 95% of the time it can be done that way, but if they don't feel like they're getting what they need, they can come talk to me.

Singsaas: Is there any example that really caught your eye maybe in this tour or your previous command tour where that system of leadership that you try to portray was successful?

Comptroller Sq CC: I think for the most part most folks would go to their supervisory chain. I think there's been a couple of instances where folks have had some things going on in their personal life and it was affecting them as any personal hardships do. There have been a couple folks that have come in and close the door and sat down just like we are

right now and I just listened. I think and I feel when they left they feel better. They felt like, "All right, he listened to me. He didn't pass judgment and offer suggestions. He just listened." It helps me understand them so it's easy for me to tell [when] someone is having an *off* day and understanding that background helps me interact with them better so them feeling comfortable enough to come in here and talk to me about that stuff...I think it's a success.

Singsaas: Some might say that that's an example of authentic leadership, where you may be in a position of command, but you want to always maintain the person that you are and convey that to everyone in your organization so they look at you as a commander first, but a human being always. They must be able to talk to you as a human being with the respect of the position that you hold.

Comptroller Sq CC: Yes, right. As a commander, I've had some things in my personal life over the past couple of months that have come out, and [while] I don't stand in front of the squadron or give a briefing on it, I [do] share that with people so they know that, "You know what, I have struggles too." I don't feel like I'm the type of person that people look at [and think], "Oh, my gosh he's not ... He can't..." although some people feel that way. There are always going to be people that are going to feel that way, who don't feel they can talk to me. But, I think for the most part the people feel that way and I try to use the things are going in my life to say, "Hey, guys you're not the only one that has these problems and it helps me to talk through some of these things that I have.

Singsaas: For your own growth?

Comptroller Sq CC: For my own growth. Because I'm a person too and I deal with and struggle with things just like everybody else.

Singsaas: Do you convey that message in an open [commander's] call? Do you hold a presentation or walk around your unit talking to folks individually or in small groups? What's the best method that you found to convey?

Comptroller Sq CC: Walking around. Fortunately, for me I have this relatively small quadrant. It's about 45 people so I'm not like an AMXS (Aircraft Maintenance Squadron) where there's no way that I could get around and talk to over 700 people. Here, daily I walk around and sometimes there's nothing more than, "Morning, how you guys doing?" Sometimes just, "Hey, what's going on? Do you have a good weekend? What did you do? What are your plans for the weekend?" There's people out there that want answers to find

good and there's other people out there that just open up and I learn a lot about those folks and what's going on. There's been a few times where I've done that where somebody says something and said, "Maybe we got to look into that a little bit more and see if they're doing okay and see if they need some extra assistance or help."

For me, walking around it is very helpful. I don't like to sit in front of my desk and shoot an email of it. We do bi-weekly roll calls or every other week. The chief and I will stand and whatever is going on in the world I'll stand up and say, "Hey, did you read the news yesterday? Did you see what's going on in North Korea? What's going on here? What's going on in the Air Force? What policy changes are coming?" just to talk to them. Most of the time they don't have any feedback for me, but sometimes somebody asks a question to add to it, but it's just an awareness thing just to get to look at everybody in the face versus through email.

- Singsaas: Absolutely. Folks say that another form of face-to-face communication is through social media and in your unit, though relatively small with about 45 folks...
- Comptroller Sq CC: Right.
- Singsaas: Do you have any kind of social media inject whether it's a unit Facebook page or some kind of message that sent out like a spouse club?
- Comptroller Sq CC: We have key spouses that we're still trying to work on integrating and figure out the best way, but as far as social media I don't really use that. In a squadron as small as ours to me it's easier and more personable to walk around and it's real easy if something, let's say, the staff (staff sergeant) results come out. It's really easy for me to gather everybody up for five minutes and say, "Hey, congratulations" so everybody can see it so I prefer that method over social media.
- Singsaas: Based on the success you've had in this command and previously, with your walk around method you've talked about modeling authentic leadership say your organization was 10-20% larger and having the ability to walk around wasn't feasible, even on a weekly basis. How might you give advice to someone who's going to be a new commander to say, "This is how I might use what experience I have to help you out in that situation?"

Comptroller Sq CC: I would say that the organization is a little bit big and I think the wing commander does this is: one, block out time on your calendar to walk around. Stuff is going to come up all day long no matter what you do, but if you block that time out and use that time and don't let other things creep into that time I think that helps. Sometimes there's going to be message as a safety messages that come out via email that I sent to those things out, but I also like to follow up with a, "Hey, did you see this? Talk to us."

I would tell them don't substitute email or social media for the face to face understanding that it may not be feasible to get around every week to talk to everybody, but if you're in a large organization maybe you carve out time, 30 minutes to an hour this week, go see this shop, next week go see this shop just so you are there and they see you. You don't want the only time they see you be at commander's call, depending on the size of your organization.

Comptroller Sq CC: First of all, make the time to do that and talk to other commanders that have been successful in using social media outlets. Maybe they can provide some advice on what worked and what didn't work for them. That's what I would tell you, "go on other people's experiences and what work and what didn't work."

Singsaas: How do you incorporate the families of Airmen within your organization?

Comptroller Sq CC: Well, we have certain events throughout the year: a squadron holiday party and a summer picnic. Any time we are doing other events, which we're trying to do more of those, is to bring families by trying to figure out how to best utilize the key spouses. Which, honestly, I think in a small organization is a little bit tougher because you have certain family members that really don't want to be involved. You have others that do, so you have that smaller network and trying to use those key spouses it makes a little bit more difficult which is what we're trying to work through now. Different things like at close out (end of fiscal year close-out) we have a potluck type of thing and people can bring their spouses in.

Singsaas: End of the year financial closeout?

Comptroller Sq CC: Yeah, at the end of the year. I have a lot of single people too, where there are no families. Some spouses prefer not to come in and others you see them around and you just talk to them when you see them. I've never been in a very large organization or been a commander for a large organization, but I think it would be

easier because you have more people that can pull together to get those families involved, but we pass out all this information for FSS happenings (Force Support Squadron—morale and welfare) all that stuff that comes out and hoping that military members are passing that information down to their family members so they know what's going on and what they can get involved in.

Singsaas: Since your first command tour, all the experiences you've had from the very beginning until now...knowing that you don't use social media very often, professionally. There are folks that do and one of the concerns of junior subordinates is, "If I use social media it may portrayed me in a negative way or a positive way." Do you address those issues and if so how do you balance that?

Comptroller Sq CC: Yes. Back when we talked about OPSEC (Operational Security) and remember the whole thing with the ISIS hit list and the things that people post out there on social media is that there was a period there where there was lots of stuff about social media coming out and I've had numerous conversations through my staff meetings and roll calls with the squadron where they talked about responsible social media usage along with the stuff that communications (base communications) sends out and just telling them, "Be careful what you post out there. You may think you're just posting it on your wall for your friends, but once that stuff starts getting shared that's something you don't want out there. Don't put it out there because once you put it in a digital world it's out there and it'll probably always be out there so be very careful of what you post." We see these stories all the time that make the national news. I think there was a young Army sergeant up in Washington or Oregon that was doing something in front of the flag. I forgot exactly what it was, but that just blew out.

Singsaas: The female?

Comptroller Sq CC: Yes. It doesn't take much and you might think you're being cute or you're being funny, but it can blow up in your face and you need to be very careful about that, but it's also a good tool to pass along information and stay in touch with family members. You just have to be cognizant and responsible about what you're putting out there. I'm not big on social media. I have a Facebook account and I just follow family members and old friends and I very rarely post anything out there.

Singsaas: Do folks in your organization ask to friend you on Facebook?

- Comptroller Sq CC: Even my last tour here I don't think I've ever received a request from anybody inside the organization to friend me. I'm trying to think if I have or not. I know if I did get a request from somebody within the organization, I would not [friend them]. I would wait till after I leave and I'm no longer in this position to friend somebody.
- Singsaas: Outside of Facebook, do you have any accounts such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram...?
- Comptroller Sq CC: No, but I'm looking at getting a LinkedIn account because I'm about to retire so I can use that professional network to maybe help with the after service type things. But no, I'm trying to think if I have any other...I don't think I do.
- Singsaas: How would you define successful leadership communication?
- Comptroller Sq CC: One, I say communication is probably the biggest challenge that most leaders have. It's a challenge that I have. Everybody takes in information differently. Some people are happy with an email, some people would prefer face to face and some people might prefer social media. Trying to balance how you get the word out to people without overloading them. An example, where a message will come out and you'll probably get it four or five times from different sources and at some point people are just like, "Delete, delete, delete" it just becomes too much. It just becomes information overload. It's trying to balance that where folks get the message and you're not overloading them with stuff and sending a consistent message.
- I got a feedback in the past that folks sometimes they get it verbally and sometimes they get it through email so trying to be consistent with how you get the message out, but also understanding you're never going to make everybody happy. It's never going to be perfect for each individual person, but trying to find that balance across the board. I think in a unit in my size and the pulse I've got is that I don't know if social media would be real beneficial to me. I think email, the verbal and the walking around is the balance to get the word out to folks with the understanding that it's never going to be perfect for everyone.
- Singsaas: This is exactly why its interesting interviewing folks who are in command of a large organization above 200 to 300 folks because their style of leadership shouldn't change. It's difficult to convey that style across that large of an organization and still maintain its quality.

Comptroller Sq CC: Right.

Singsaas: Thinking about the position we are in now: you're a squadron commander in the United States Air Force, which includes 307,000 people across the whole globe. How would you incorporate lessons learned you would like to pass on before you retire? And, if you had a chance one day to send that message to Air Force senior leaders, how would you suggest they change how they utilize social media to maintain that authenticity?

Comptroller Sq CC: I would say be consistent with the messaging and balancing. I'll use John Q. Public as an example. There are positives and negatives with that and people say you don't necessarily have to believe everything, but you should look at it. As commanders, they tell us, "look at that to see what our Airmen are reading," and then be able to dispel, to talk as a leader, to pay attention to what's out there on social media and talk about it. I say John Q. Public on several occasions has gone after finance. This has been probably within the last year and when we see those things we talk about it in front of the squadron and say, "Hey, this is what's being said out there." I reiterate to them that you guys are doing exactly what you need to do so it's talking about what's out there, dispelling negativity or things that just aren't true and some of that stuff is emotionally charged and comes off to folks.

There were people in finance that probably took that very personally, especially people that are at the base they were going after. It's one data point and making sure that as commanders we'd stepped in when that happens and say, "Okay, this is one data point." If it is a bigger issue, address that issue. If it's an issue at your base, address what you can do to make it better. But to use a consistent message on social media. Keep it professional. I know here I've heard the Facebook page for the base and people can get out there and put some nasty comments. It's very unprofessional comments and just dispelling that stuff addressing it when it happens. You can get good discussions, you get good comments and making sure it stays professional especially if it's a professional social media site or professional social media account.

Singsaas: Absolutely. Last question. As a leader these days, you must address information that's released via social media, especially if it's outside your control, because you have to quantify and give it merit or take that merit away. Can you describe an anecdote where there was something published that impacted how folks viewed finance? How you address that issue? And what the reaction was within your organization after the fact?

Comptroller Sq CC: I'm trying to remember the exact details, but it was probably a year ago. I think it's been since I've been here. It was on John Q. Public where it was talking about finance and how they're always closed and how nobody is ever there, but you don't know the back-story behind that. So they could have a CAF (Combat Air Force) day, it could have been a multitude of things. So when that came out, the younger folks were talking about it and they saw it and some of them are like, "Yeah, whatever. It's John Q. Public." I don't know how many of them really internalized it, but at one of our roll calls we talked about it. We got up there and said, "This is out there and again it's one data point" reiterating the fact that, "You know what, we don't know what the specific circumstances are behind that, but understand that we appreciate everything you guys do in your support to this wing." And I tell people too I'm like, "often times when we hear from customers is because there's a problem."

Its probably more times or not that we hear from them because of something that's wrong versus, "I appreciate the hard work that you do." So when I do get those accolades I read them in front of the whole squadron so they can hear when those happen. But addressing that thing with finance it's like, "You know what, I'm sure that probably happens here. If we close for a CAF (Combat Air Force) day ... We don't close very often. Somebody is going to walk up [to finance] and they just need to understand and we'll address it if it happens and if it comes through the channels, which I don't think has happened here at least since I've been here, and just making sure that they understand that, "Look, you guys are doing a great job. Just because you don't always get the accolades and people don't take the time to say, "man, finance really hooked me up today and they did great."

Some people do and some people don't. That has happened. However many people we support on this base, how many of them come in? Well, not many, because they're happy and you guys are taken care of them so don't forget that. Don't forget the support and how everybody is appreciative or most people are appreciative of what they do. Understand that it's one data point and don't let that set the tone for how you view customers or how you view your job here in finance. And it's ever since I've been in the finance. You see the little cartoons out on Facebook or the jokes that go around and it's always going to be there. It's just a little ribbing, but of it can be little hurtful to people and just let them know that that's not the reality.

Singsaas: I think to make this interview go full circle...back at the beginning we talked about how authentic leadership has really become your personal leadership style and how when you're talking to the whole squadron you'll convey an anecdotes from your personal life that make you authentic. That does not put on the spot that uses the position you're in to say, "I'm human just like you." I think with the information you just said, there are negative aspects to any organization and if they associate those to your unit you acknowledge them and say, "We're not perfect. It may not be us, but we're doing good and here's why."

Comptroller Sq CC: Yeah, perfect.

*Appendix J***Interview Transcript****Security Forces Squadron Commander (Lieutenant Colonel)**

- Singsaas: Thank you for participating as a critical component of this qualitative data collection. You've agreed to participate in a Creighton university dissertation study, where your candid interview responses may be selected for inclusion in a final research publication. To ensure the utmost confidentiality, your personal and professional identity will be masked to the general public from this point forward. For the record, please state your rank and position.
- Sec Forces SQ/CC: Lieutenant Colonel. Commander [XX] Security Forces Squadron
- Singsaas: How many years of service do you have in the Air Force?
- Sec Forces SQ/CC: Just over 15.
- Singsaas: How old are you?
- Sec Forces SQ/CC: 37, just about 38. Gosh, how time flies, right?
- Singsaas: 37 and 11 months.
- Sec Forces SQ/CC: Pretty darn. Yeah.
- Singsaas: How long have you been in your current position?
- Sec Forces SQ/CC: This squadron command, since July 15th of 2015. It's just over 6 months.
- Singsaas: What is your primary career field?
- Sec Forces SQ/CC: AFSC (Air Force Specialty Code) 31P, security forces.
- Singsaas: How many command tours have you completed, including this one?
- Sec Forces SQ/CC: All right, I've completed 3; this is my 4th, squadron command tour.
- Singsaas: How many Airmen are assigned within your current organization?

Sec Forces SQ/CC: I've got 483 Air Force Airmen on my unit, but I also have tactical control over about 60 U.S. Navy Masters at Arms, up to 45 department of the Air Force civilian police officers, and 23 permanent party department of the Air Force civilians.

Singsaas: That's almost 620 or so?

Sec Forces SQ/CC: A touch over 600.

Singsaas: This first question is intended to be open-ended and conversational. Since the start of your command tenure, or any of your command tenures in the past, describe an antidote where you recognized the establishment of your personal leadership style.

Sec Forces SQ/CC: Well, so I have to go back to, just prior to going on my last deployment, left in 2008. I was working at an organization that was highly deplorable. We were getting ready to set up a first ever mission in Iraq. I was helping establish the mission, kind of as the first ever piece to it. And the colonel that I was working for, was sitting as the Vice Wing Commander at the time, had just moved up from being the group commander that I worked for.

He said, "Okay [first name], I need you to exhibit courageous leadership". He goes "So, what am I trying to tell you. I'm not trying to tell you to go out there and run and catch bullets or do any of that stuff and win decorations and awards.". He goes "What I'm really telling you to do" he goes "I need you to tell me when I'm wrong." He goes "And I need you to tell me quickly, and bluntly.". He goes "And here's why.". He goes "Because of the way I lead", he says "I lead in a way where I'm never afraid to go in and lose my job."

It took me a while to figure out what he meant. But what he meant by that was, the minute that you go in and you're worried about getting fired, you're doing it for yourself then, and you're never doing it for your Airmen. So by having those confidants and those close advisors to tell you, when you're getting it wrong, that's big, and making sure that they know they have that capability to tell you that. That stuck with me, and I've always really tried to carry that way through. That was prior to my very first squadron command.

Singsaas: How have you embodied that courageous leadership in yourself? When was the first time you recognized you actually carrying that out?

Sec Forces SQ/CC: It was on my deployment. It was on a deployment. Had to go in and tell the boss, that failed epically, but I was very careful to recognize that I don't want to go identify problems; I tried to go in and help create the solution as well. So part of that recognition piece from the subordinate part of it, was "Okay sir, here's what I saw that went wrong with it. However, here's why I recommend we try, we go forwards, we prosper. Here's how I can help you get there, and make sure, again, it's all about the mission, and that we're doing it."

Now, flip that from the commander side of it too. There have been plenty of times when I've had people tell me "Hey, that was an epic failure boss." So I always own it. I'm never the one to take credit, but anything that happens in the organization, and I will take full responsibility for anything and everything that happens here too. It's the nature of the job, but it's also, just quite frankly, the right thing to do, from the human perspective, I think. I think if your people do that, you know that they take care of you, or you take care of them, they'll take care of you, and thus the mission happens. It's what it's all about. It kind of seems very basic at its core, but it's really what it's all about. Right? It's the simplest of things that make the most complex things happen, and happen well. So...

Singsaas: 6 months ago, with all your experience you have, leading up to assuming this position, how did you communicate that to your squadron here?

Sec Forces SQ/CC: So when I went in, I spoke from the heart. Right off the heels of the change in command, I followed with the senior staff get together, on day one. I waited to have my Commander's Call till the following week, to where I could be very mythical. It wasn't rushed. I could get out and I could see a few work centers on the forefront, plant some seeds. Because the test was, I wanted to see, were people listening to the message I was giving. Because I know I'm not the previous guy, but I know there will always be a successor to me as well. What I try to make in during, is what the mission is all about. Not about what I bring to it. It's what I can do for them.

Singsaas: Makes sense.

Sec Forces SQ/CC: That was really the underlying message that I've always tried to carry through. As it goes, I always try to talk to the folks around here, and say "Look, if you ask for feedback...", in fact we just got some suggestions out of the comment box today, say "Hey, X, Y,

and Z, I'll answer it. It may not be what you want to hear, but I'm going to tell you, I will do everything I absolutely can with the utmost transparency that I have, capable to you.". That's it.

Singsaas: Recalling these leadership developments, how have they influenced your approach to professional interaction with Airmen in your unit?

Sec Forces SQ/CC: So for professional development, right? Okay, so for professional development, a lot of it, I think is really getting to know a lot, particularly at the squadron command level, knowing a lot more about what other people's units do and how we fit into the greater machine, I think is the biggest piece to it. I talk to and talk about security forces stuff a lot less than anybody else in this organization, and that's the way it should be too. Part of the thing I tell everybody is, it's ... I apologize for the visual piece, as we talk through a recorded conversation, but it's easy for the minds eye to wrap itself around an organizational chart, because it looks like a pyramid.

Whoever is in charge, whatever echelon, you name it. All the way from the flight, or work center, all the way up through headquarters of the United States Air Force. Somebody works for somebody, and there's always somebody in charge. But in reality, the way that I see that it's carried out and executed, that person that's responsible is actually the apex is at the bottom. It's an inverted pyramid, with the apex at the bottom. The way that I see that executing, as we communicate to our Airmen, whoever is in charge, again, that whatever echelon, they have to recognize that they don't ... The people in there don't work for them, that leader works for all of them. And if the leader fails, it can have catastrophic effects for the everything within their span of control, cause it crumbles and gravity, and all that other stuff.

But I also throw it back and say, "But we all have an inherent responsibility, no matter where we fall in that pyramid, to maintain the balance." Because if everything gets to out of whack, at the widest part of it, at the top, it could still fall over and crumble. So we all have to rely on each other. Just know that I work for you all, first and foremost. But we all have a common goal, and that goal is that next bigger pyramid. Shaped like that of course. I think that's a good way to verbally describe and visually portray to particularly the ranked subordinate and position subordinate people that we have. Why leadership exists, why the officers structure exists. Particularly in the very heavy enlisted organization. It's me, I've got my operations officer that's a major, and I've got 3

second lieutenants. The other 600 plus people, all either civilian or enlisted.

It's certainly a great leadership laboratory for those young butter bars [second lieutenants] that are there.

Singsaas: Right.

Sec Forces SQ/CC: Teaching them, own the responsibility piece, but make sure that you always publicize the price. It's just kind of a neat concept that I do. From a professional development perspective, I always try to bring that to the table, when I talk to my peers. But as part of that responsible piece, I always tell the Airmen, and the defenders, and the Navy folks that work in here, "Why, what we do matters to everybody else out here.". And on the flip side of it too, why everybody out here matters to us. We don't live on an island. All career fields sometimes suffer from the stovepipe way of looking at things. But we all have a role to keep, for each other. Cause I know I'm not the [primary] mission on [this] Air Force Base.

Singsaas: Right.

Sec Forces SQ/CC: But without my mission, all the other missions fail. With out all the other missions, I don't have one. So it's that synergistic effect. I really try to make that's ingrained into these folks too.

Singsaas: You talked a lot about your intra-organizational leadership. How do you focus inside the organization from all of the levels you just mentioned?

Sec Forces SQ/CC: As we talk through, I'm not a fan of having meetings, for the sake of having meetings. That's the way I've always gone forward with my business. If there's a meeting on there, it's going to be important. If it runs longer, great, if it runs short, I'm going to give that time back, so people can actually do their jobs. But as I do that, I always make sure that there are touch points in there.

So every Monday morning, I've got a section head huddle. We do it in here. My staff meeting is in the conference room, it becomes a little bit more formal. If there are awards and decorations that I give out, I try to do it at their work center. What that helps with me, it helps balance the calendar. So I'm out and about seeing the people of the organization, because I don't run it. The people run the organization. I just attend all the really bad meetings and make sure that the process has happened. I get to brag about it, that makes my day. It's awesome.

But how I try to synergize that, is I always try to have, like what our wing commander does, add themes to the message. Where do we fit in, why does it matter, if not you, then who? It's a great one that I love that [our wing commander] uses so, I try to re-emphasize that with these guys. We talk about innovations and challenging the status quo, and things of that nature. I try to use those words as a way to wrap in things that we do, in our corporate stovepipe, in our kind of perspective, which agile combat support piece is a hard widget to fit in all the expansive missions that it so often has. How do you tie some of that in, when security standards are security standards, are security standards. How innovative can we be if it's in black and white and affecting the nuclear enterprise, right?

Well, I don't know how innovative we really can get, with posting, but I'll tell you we can sure get innovate with how we do our time management. How we do some of our back-end training. How we do some of the other processes, internal that don't affect the actual physical and personal security aspects of it. Just trying to be a little bit different in that perspective too.

It's interesting. I always ... I love the term, Napoleons corporal stuff. No matter how many great ideas we have, up in the echelons of the organization. If it doesn't make sense to the Airmen, why are we doing it? Or why are we doing it that way?

Singsaas: Right.

Sec Forces SQ/CC: I like to get buy-in, is a big piece. Again, it goes back to who works for who perspective.

Singsaas: What are some of the different mediums you've used to help communicate that buy in?

Sec Forces SQ/CC: I will tell you and it's interesting that you talk about that, because of the [wing] commander's feedback piece that we did last week, that's one of the big pieces I talked about, was how I best communicate with the organization. Roughly 80 percent of the unit is our line troops. They are the ones that go out there, they posted, making the 24/7 operation occur. Most of the posts, no cell phones are authorized because of where they work, which means then no social media access, no email access, no phone access, unless their post has a hard line, or they've got a radio back to the commandant in control mode. Face to face is absolutely the best way I can do it.

When I've got big pieces of follow-up and big announcements, I'll hit it at our Monday staff huddle. I'll reinvigorate it at my Thursday staff meeting. I'll hit it face to face when I do guard mount visits. I'll send it out via e-mail to the squadron discharge list, and I'll also post a hard copy on our bulletin boards. So I'm getting out there, trying to do in mass, as much as I can. Where we've got the social things going on, I've got a robust Key Spouse program. In fact, I've got nine spouses that are on it, because the organization is so large, and each one of them kind of has a different role. We've got one gal that she does nothing but the social media stuff. Post stuff out on our Facebook site.

Singsaas: Really?

Sec Forces SQ/CC: Yes. As part of that, we educate the spouses on some of the social media responsibilities and kind of a safe guard them with the privacy stuff. Once a quarter, she'll scrub it, based on who's PCS, and if they are no longer associated with the unit, then they get off the list, because, again it goes to the anti-terrorism enforced protection pieces of it. And we educate all spouses as they come into this unit, "Hey, welcome to the page, here are some of the things that you know, here are kind of some of the standing rules.", and this kind of thing, which has turned out to be a pretty positive thing.

Singsaas: As a leader, how much interaction do you personally have on the social media front?

Sec Forces SQ/CC: Actually quite often. I don't personally post on any of the social media things. It's not my way, because I tend to speak my mind in a lot of things. And I know quite often, a lot of stuff loses context, when it goes in black and white, versus the verbal, or the interpersonal piece, the face-to-face side. I'd rather pick up the phone and call somebody and talk to them, or get up, unchained from the e-mail, which I love to do, and go out and see people then post something on Facebook.

But I will always make sure that if I want something out there, I get somebody that has the right kind of skill set, that's why this particular spouse was put there, and we also have the squadron too, that's done through our Defenders association, or Security Forces association. I'll give them intent and I'll let them run with it. Kind of give them, "Hey, here's my left and right, here's the direction I want you to go, go forth.". Now if they've got questions, they come back and say, "Hey boss, here's some feedback for you.", I'll give them guidance all they want, which is great.

I try to delegate a lot of the communication too, and make sure that there are a lot of people that they know, that I have to have the trust, that they can speak on my behalf, on a lot of different things. That's one of the ways I help do that.

Singsaas: How do you think that perspective that you just spoke about ties in your courageous leadership?

Sec Forces SQ/CC: I think it absolutely ties into it to, because if they know that I trust them, for speaking on my behalf, when it comes to sending messages down, or laterally, they know that I've got their back if they come and tell me that something is not right. It's that synergy, that synergistic perspective, how it all wraps together and really it gives you that upward spiral, it gives you that lift. I think that's a good thing. All too often, if you stifle communications, you say "No, no I have to take that", or "I don't trust you to do that", why would they tell you if something is wrong then. "Well, if he's going to own it all, he's really going to own it all."

Unfortunately, I know that we all too often have seen that in a leader, whatever level. I'm not a fan of that. I try to keep it as comfortable as I possibly can, to try to set that unspoken tone to the folks. Say, "Look if you can get out of the office, then get out of the office.". I'm not going to tell you you're duty days X to X, and you have to follow it, if you have something with your family, as long as you're work is done, train to work to the standard, not the time.

I think that's the same sort of thing that comes with the communication, "Hey, if it's within your purview, great.". If you're working a project, just let me know about it, and I'll advocate on your behalf, where I might say, "Hey, I'm going to tell you a little something you didn't know this side of it, but go, it's your project, run with it, I'll just help you form." In fact, the next meeting that I've got on the calendar is that kind of thing, where I've got a Master Sergeant, he's really putting together a lot of [material], and it deals specifically with innovation. We're bringing over some outside agencies, and we're really going to talk through what we want to change, a particular culture for training, that we've got in the organization.

I'm excited to see where this may go. I'm hoping we're able to get some good thumbs up from the boss on this. I'm not going to spill the beans on it yet, in the event we fail miserably, but we're going to really, really work to completely challenge the status queue on this one. We'll see how the boss receives it.

Singsaas: It's a cool example of that initial vision, and you really have no idea where it's going to go after that

Sec Forces SQ/CC: Yeah. But how will we know if we don't try.

Singsaas: Exactly. The next question I'm going to try and frame visually, because it's got several parts to it.

Sec Forces SQ/CC: Did you want something to drink? I've got sparkling water; it's what I've got.

Singsaas: I'm good actually. Thanks, sir.

We've gone through a lot of background on your inspiration for courageous leadership, and how you've been on the receiving end, and now on the production end of that. We've talked about how a lot of your vision is delegated, and how folks are given their courageous power to lead on their own, and you have their back, just like they have yours. So using social media as an example, can you think of a positive anecdote where through your leadership, you've had someone that's subordinate to you, lead through social media to tie the whole circle together, to bring something positive back to the organization.

Sec Forces SQ/CC: It gets hard on social media for a lot of reasons. I know ... I think one of the better positives, is having the delegation, and I'll just use the key spouses on this one. It goes back to my time prior to squadron command, and I'll get back to the command, my command experience with it. But, I really learned a lot about the social media aspect and the openness and the transparency piece, particularly when it comes to deployments and spouses and family.

Back in 2006, when I had my first deployment, it was out of, again, that same first-in organization. We were doing outside the wire combat mission in Baghdad. And prior to it, I thought the group commander; it was the same group commander, who ended up hiring me to take me back to [Iraq], for the second thing that we talked about. But, as we were getting ready to head out the door, I mean he held town hall [meeting] after town hall, and bringing the spouses in, and he set up really, what I think was a big genesis for the greater Key Spouse program. It was called the Family and Loved One Action and Information Committee, FLAIC. I don't know if it's still called the FLAIC or not, but I think it was ... I think it's really what ended up turning into the Key Spouse program.

This guy has vision, and really just didn't care what anybody thought, and I thought that was really neat. At the time, it was like "Come on sir, how many of these things do I have to go through, and sit through, and just listen to all the stuff going in." But it turns out, then we deploy, and the spouse networks had a focal point, to be able to go through and kind of channel that information and have VFR-direct ability to talk to him. As the only group commander for 166 of us that deployed out of that squadron. We're doing an outside the wire combat mission, and it really proved its worth when we had a kid that was hit by a sniper, in the leg, and then not to long after that, another one that was killed.

It really, really, paid dividends for the lessons learned and helped shape my perspectives on being able to have the ability to communicate. And it just so happens that ... I don't know if you're been watching the news, but there was open source, there was an attack at [Afghanistan] and six U.S. service members, Air Force members, OSI (office of Special Investigations) and security forces. It's just today, it's kind of re-emphasized and re-fused the parts of me that really hold onto that communication piece. Talking through, with our Key Spouses, I had a team deployed, to that area right now.

Singsaas: Same unit?

Sec Forces SQ/CC: Same unit as well. They were not involved. They're all good to go. But communicating that with the spouses, the ones that are still here, that those folks are deployed. I tapped right into that Key Spouse program, say "Okay, here's what we know." I try to get ahead of it, before all the questions start flowing in like, "Why are you telling us", "Is everybody okay?" What I can tell you is that everybody is okay. Now anything beyond that, nothings released ... I don't even know anyway, and even if I did, obviously I couldn't tell them, but I've got to say something.

That's the part ... Fast forward to the social media aspect, and I think the biggest lesson learned in the spring of 2011, my second squadron command opportunity, I had a young troop that committed suicide, while deployed. When the notification came through, it came through to the command post, and the way the command post was set up, there was a curtain between the command post and the emergency communication center, so fire and security forces dispatch. Because it was such a small working environment, my cops heard the call come in, and they were like "Oh my gosh." Being able to get on the front end of that, and talk to my guys, and say, "Listen, we need to be careful with the social

media aspect.” because low and behold, all the inquiries started coming in. "Oh my gosh, this happened."

Even with all the communication lock down stuff. Being able to have a squadron post, as soon as it was available, the organization is going through this, a lot of people to grieve, give them venues to be able to talk to people. It kind of came about as a positive, because we had some folks afterwards say, "Hey, thanks for keeping us in the loop on what was going on, to the extent you could.". I think everybody understands that when something happens, there's next of kin notification, then the [first] 24 hours, then the public announcement comes out after that. But being able to guide people to resources let them know that as we have updates, we'll share what we can, and then following up on that.

I think there was a big positive lesson out of that too. I was still a young guy. I'd just pinned on major. It was a pretty good formative way to work into my next command, and then now this one. Thank goodness nothing has happened here.

Singsaas: Exactly.

Sec Forces SQ/CC: I did have another troop that past away, just before I left my last command, my last base, and three weeks before coming here.

Singsaas: Wow.

Sec Forces SQ/CC: It doesn't get any easier, but the lessons learned become more and more clear. And that part flows just that more smoothly, every time something tragically strikes, unfortunately.

Singsaas: Some would say leadership in the military isn't just about leading Airmen; it includes their families as well. How has that expedience influenced how you communicate with the dependents of the Airmen within your organization?

Sec Forces SQ/CC: I would absolutely say that the communication with the greater family is just as vital as the communication with the Airmen. Because, particularly in a career field we've got, I think the aggregate age or mean average age in this unit is 23.4 years old, or something like that. With less than 5 years of service. Across from my chief, who's got 28, to the brand new Airmen that come straight out of tech school. You average that out, that's a young organization.

Especially with the numbers that we have. Most of these kids coming out of tech school, not married. Some of them fall in love, and get married right as soon as they get out of tech school, and come on up here. The vast majority have never lived anywhere but home. Never had to manage how they communicate back home, and then when they do get married, a lot of them... "Well, you don't need to know dear," or it's just, work is work, and home is home and there is absolutely nothing between.

That gets difficult particularly when we deploy somebody or send them TDY (Temporary Duty), and something happens. Something happens to the family, or the pipe breaks because it's the first time they've lived anywhere north of South Texas, or something like that, and probably freezes and bursts in the middle of winter. Holy crap, something is going to happen, and it's always going to be when the military member is gone. So if really, at commanders calls, I always have a representative or few from the Key Spouse group. I always make sure I hit on it. The way I use the Key Spouse group, is not just for spouses. Look, if you've got mom and dad at home, they want to get information from the Key Spouses. Great, get them in touch with them. If you've got girlfriends, boyfriends, sisters, brothers, cousins. We use the term spouse, because I have to appoint spouses. They've got to have an affiliation and access for me to be able to do that.

But I use it a little differently, particularly because of the demographic of the unit. I know in a flying organization, particularly ... My experience is mostly in the fighter community. It bases on them. I know that their demographic by and large, is going to be mid to senior company grade and a whole lot of field grade officers, and you're going to have in the upper double digits of married with kids. Their communication is going to flow a whole lot differently than in an organization like that. I try to open the opportunity. I've had a few folks that have taken me up on that, which is great, and I encourage that.

Also, all my PRP's, I've got 21 PRP (The Personnel Reliability Program is a United States Department of Defense security, medical and psychological evaluation program, designed to permit only the most trustworthy individuals to have access to nuclear weapons (NPRP), chemical weapons (CPRP), and biological weapons (BPRP) certifications) coming up tomorrow. Little bit busier than normal, but as we have people show up, I'll show one of these to you real quick... So like for example, this kid, coming straight out of tech school, we get the PRP certification checklist, and all these other things, as far as how they fill all their stuff out.

But this is the one that I really like the most. It's actually the information card [shows information card].

Everybody new to the unit fills this out, and the best part about it, is it gives me points of contact, particularity for parents, if they've unmarried. Spouses and a lot of the stuff is in here, so we have the ability to make sure we reach back for spouses and children. I can go into the First Sergeant office and say, "Hey, we've got a special event today." They can look up in the database and say, "Oh yeah, so and so has an anniversary, this persons has a birthday in the family."

But any brand new Airman, straight out of tech school, I do a hand signed letter, and send it to their parents. And say, "Look, they were received here, all is well, here is my direct line, and my e-mail address. If you need anything please contact me."

Singsaas: Awesome.

Sec Forces SQ/CC: I think that's a good way, I've had parents reach out to me, not very often, but I've had a few, and say, "Hey, thanks, that was kind of neat, we didn't expect to get a letter from the commander. " Like I said, everybody is more important in this organization than me. I can get hit by a bus and the Air Force might grieve for about 2 minutes, but they're going to find somebody to come in and, again, go back and take those crappy meetings and make sure the processes are still good to go. But if there's anything out on the line, that [person] would really make the mission happen.

I hope that wraps us a very long answer to a short question, but I think those are the policies on how things influence through time, on the positive pieces of social media communication.

Singsaas: Here's a big question: How would you define successful leadership communication?

Sec Forces SQ/CC: Successful leadership communication. I would define that as, when the message goes out, it's received, it's understood, and feedback is provided. More often than not, though unfortunately, somewhere in there, it's either, it's received or not. It's understood or not, or the feedback piece is not given. In one of those 3 buckets, I would say there is, unfortunately, majority of the time; one of those 3 is not working, which means that it's not successful leadership communication.

- Singsaas: Perfect. That feedback piece, I think is critical. I don't think a lot of folks actually retain, or understand how valuable that can be. If you had the opportunity to change one aspect of Air Force level social media, that feedback piece, going back, up to the very top. Describe how your lessons learned help to offer insight to improve that communication, Air Force way.
- Sec Forces SQ/CC: It's strictly on a social media perspective. I think it's got to go back to culture. I think that right there is that tough nut. If we can instill the right social media culture, to where it doesn't become an anonymous electronic means to blast somebody, and air a grievance just to air it. I think if it's done responsibly and done with the intent of providing appropriate, applicable, useful feedback, that's the way we do it. I think cracking the nut is going to be in the culture piece and the responsible aspect of it.
- That starts right here. That starts with the commanders. That starts with us, insuring we reinforce that, by giving the opportunity and if somebody fails at it, okay lets reinforce that, lets use it as a teaching moment, so long as it doesn't broach the criminal. Allow people to grow from it and learn from it, and that's a hard thing for people to do. It's a hard thing to allow people to share those things, without feeling like they're going to get crushed for having an opinion.
- Singsaas: It's all your courageous influence.
- Sec Forces SQ/CC: Yeah. It's hard. It's really hard. I mean you wouldn't believe how many times I go into the guard mount and ask, "Hey, who's got questions." I know people have questions. I said, "Okay, I know you guys aren't going to talk, or a lot of you won't talk to me because you're going to want to make sure you don't say anything, and that you're NCO (Non-Commissioned Officer), and then the senior NCO, and then the CGO (Company Grade Officer), and then everybody else between. Well, wait a minute; I never had the opportunity to help answer that. I said, "I know you all have questions, but that's why I'm giving you so many different venues to do it, and if I stop and I ask you a question in the hallway, it's because I truly want to hear the answer to it, it's not because I feel obliged, and I'm just doing you lip service.
- Ask the hard questions, and the feedback in our suggestion box has really started to come. I've gotten more people to come to the door every day. I get people to stop and ask me questions, and it's good. The part that I really make sure that I try and check myself on, is if I get one of those hard questions, I'm not going back down to say,

"Hey, what gives people. Why was it like this?" I say, "Hey, I understand this is like this. Where did I fail, what resources did I not give you to make sure that it didn't fall off the boat, like it apparently has. How can I help fix it now?" I try to be as very careful as I can.

I'm very careful to not say always, but I really try to the maximum extent possible to give everybody the room to grow and fail. That's one thing, so long ago; I created a sheet ... Let's see if I've got it in here. This just happens to be the one I did at [assignment in Asia]. This is kind of like my expectations piece. I always lay out what people can expect from me, what I expect from them, and kind of some of the things that I don't tolerate. But part of it is the mistakes piece, right in here. Don't be afraid to make mistakes. There's obviously a difference between a mistake and a crime. I tell people, "Hey, I make mistakes all the time. Number one, ask my wife. Number two, ask my secretary and my chief [Chief Master Sergeant]."

Sec Forces SQ/CC: I try to bring a little bit of leavening to things too. I think it's important to show people that, while a commander needs to be the expert in a lot of things, the things that its important to show that we're fallible and human as well. So trying to put people on so much of a pedestal, that ... Hey, I'll flub stuff up every now and again. I will screw it up, I screw stuff up daily. From misspellings to getting someone's name wrong, to whatever. I think it's easy to stay out of the colonel side of it, but I'm going to screw it up all the time, and I'm not afraid to own it.

I'm not afraid to tell people about that. I'm not afraid to fix it. I think it goes back to that messaging piece, of lets get the culture right and allow people to have that piece, but do it in a way to where, we can use growing and teaching points out of it.

Singsaas: Would you say that's an avenue of reverse feedback?

Sec Forces SQ/CC: Absolutely. It's got to go both ways. If it doesn't, then we've just ... It's the opposite of the feedback loop. Then it becomes a process. We have processes for days.

Singsaas: Right.

Sec Forces SQ/CC: Yeah. I like the way you framed that. That was good.

Singsaas: I think it's truly an example where... We talked about [how] there is leadership in the organization this way. We also talked about

how your leadership is courageous and the delegation piece, and how most of your leadership in the unit originates from the mid-level folks. Where you don't really do anything, it's not your job.

Sec Forces SQ/CC: Right.

Singsaas: It's the leadership [that works its way] down. That's where it all gets done. But really, it's the reverse feedback that goes to the top, and then feeds down again.

Sec Forces SQ/CC: Yes.

Singsaas: Where there are two forms of leadership working independently of each other, which is a form or synergy.

Sec Forces SQ/CC: Absolutely. Yeah, it's got to work like that. That's a system.

Singsaas: It really is.

Sec Forces SQ/CC: Absolutely. I like it.

Singsaas: Perfect. Lets see if we can put these two together somehow. In the realm of social media, it's only been around for about 12 years. Since ... Facebook first started in 2004, so 11 almost 12. So considering that timeline, and the second half of your Air Force career has been really when it starts to pick up. You've had the 4 command tours and that same time period

Sec Forces SQ/CC: Yes.

Singsaas: Using that as a reference point, describe how utilizing social media has changed from your first command tour, to the one you in which you currently serve today.

Sec Forces SQ/CC: That's actually great. I remember going out and doing my very first experience thing. All these folks would say stay off social media. Be careful because if you see something on there, you've got to use them against them and stuff. It very much was a culture of ... And I'll use the term *peers*, because the peers are who I am now. The crusty old field grade officers, looking at an assignment or two before they are retirement eligible. That's kind of their swan song sort of thing.

The perspective was that nobody could speak their mind, nobody can get out there, nobody can use this stuff responsibly, so tamp down it. The parallel at which you do anything social media, as a

squadron commander, you're just inviting trouble, because you're going to be wrapped up doing investigations, and this, that, and the other, and I'm like ... I found that [to be] very at odds with the culture in what we try to instill as Airmen.

I look back at it as: that's not who we are as a culture. We all have the opportunity to go in and sign our name on whatever dotted line we want. I just happened to pick the Air Force because it really appealed to me that we're a service that is supposed to really value innovation and somebody who thinks, has the ability to make decisions on their feet. I will tell you from experience, in Air Force security forces Airmen, it's *very* different from an Army military police man. Not only in the way we carry our firearms, but in the way we interact with rank, and how we just have processes that are completely different.

I mean, if I can trust an 18, 19, or 20 year old with automatic weapons to keep what's out on *that* flight line, here at [our installation], safe because I've given them the empowerment and the authority to act in a legal, ethical, manor, why would I not trust them to be an adult, and do the things on social media where that's their generation. So is it the fact that we shouldn't fit into their generation, or their generation needs to fit into us. I would say, we need to adapt to the times, because the times will over take us. We will be OBE (Overcome by Events). I think that's the perspective I took.

As I've gone through multiple commands now and I've spent time on the staff, the air staff (Headquarters United States Air Force), and a few things varying in between, I've actually come to find the value in social media. What I really try to do is talk about, okay, if you're going to do it, no matter what you do ... I equate it to alcohol use, I equate it to pulling a weapon, I equate it to driving, no matter what you do, hey cooking a turkey over Thanksgiving. There are steps by which you need to apply, you need to apply risk management principles to it, you need to think through, no matter what you do, there are consequences.

There are good consequences and there are bad consequences. There are actions and reactions, and all this, that, and the other. So think through it, and oh by the way, I've got a teenage daughter at home, so oh my gosh, my life is over anyway. I think back to, what do I trust her to do, and how do I help make her a resilient adult one-day? I've got to let her think as a free human being. I've got to let her grow and develop, and I've got to give her choices. As hard as it is, it's like taking the training wheels off of a bike.

It's like, do you want your kid to fall over and get hurt, of course not, but you *do* want your kid to succeed.

It's very much like that with our Airmen, but these are adults we are talking about. If you treat them like a kid, they are going to act like a kid. I think that's the part I try to keep my whits about me in that respect. If I want them to act like adults, I need to treat them like adults. I need to treat them like they're members of the military that are given the authority to take a life. So why would I not encourage them to be responsible in how they use social media.

That's probably the perspective that I've best grown up with, from my very first experience talking with a peer. I was a mid-level captain, during my first command experience. Boy, I'm glad it's changed. I'm glad the perspective has really turned to the way, in large part, the way I see it. I see the Chief of Staff [Air Force Chief of Staff] out there, and he's got all his stuff. I see the secretary of the Air Force, she's got her own page, and she loves taking selfies. I think that's a new way to connect with the greater Air Force. As something as, and it seems kind of silly to some people...[oh] man selfies, what's the craze? But you know what, to some people that's everything. I just need to be able to ... Okay, look, I see that.

And I'll use one other little anecdote for you, because I know you've got timing that you've got to work for some other things.

Singsaas: Perfect.

Sec Forces SQ/CC: It was the diversity day. The newspaper called at base-X (in a previous assignment). I just happen to write a little piece for the paper, at the base I was stationed at, and talk about why I feel Air Power is so important, based off diversity. I talked a little bit about the Tuskegee Airmen, and I talked a little bit about the women Air Service pilots. I talked a little bit about some of these other things; the civil and social kind of movements, and why having diversity really makes us that much better.

I think it relates a lot to social media too, because people feel a lot more uninhibited as they post stuff out there, because it's odds gone, there's nothing tangible. Nobody's giving me that feedback, face to face right now. They don't feel uncomfortable doing it. That's just one of these cultural things that makes us that much better. With that comes responsibility, of course, just like it does with any other social thing. With the repeal of *Don't Ask, Don't Tell*, with the integration of minorities back in the civil rights

movement time, back in the 60's, well even before that with the military, DOD really was the United States social experiment, back in the 40's and earlier.

But that's what makes us so great. It's our ability to work with those synergies and those cultures. Because without it, were missing something. But it's funny, because some of the comments, when it was posted, it's like people just didn't get it. I felt bad for them. It didn't irritate me. I felt bad for them. Like, wow, that's not the Air Force I want you to be in. It is what it is. Anyway, I digress.

Singsaas: Do you think more people would get that article now, compared to back then?

Sec Forces SQ/CC: I would hope so. That's been a long time. I think that was posted in like, five or six years ago. I would hope so. I'm sure I would write it a little bit differently today, that much more experience that I have. But, I think the foundations of the thesis of the article remained the same. Diversity is what makes us strong. I mean, shoot, look what happened just this year, all combat jobs are now open to anyone.

Singsaas: Right

Sec Forces SQ/CC: We're in changing times. It's an interesting time to be around. We're seeing a lot of changes. The transgender stuff. I'm really curious to see where that policy is going to go, because who's to say anyone person that wants to serve is any different than another.

Singsaas: Right.

Sec Forces SQ/CC: It presents its own set of social challenges with it too, of course, but... Let's see where it takes us. Let's see where it takes us.

Singsaas: That's an awesome conclusion.

Sec Forces SQ/CC: Cool.

Singsaas: We'll stop the interview there.

Sec Forces SQ/CC: That's a good one.

*Appendix K***Interview Transcript****Combat Training Squadron Commander (Lieutenant Colonel)**

- Singsaas: Please state your rank and position for the record.
- Training SQ/CC: Lieutenant Colonel. Combat Training Squadron Commander.
- Singsaas: How many years of service do you have in the Air Force?
- Training SQ/CC: Seventeen, plus.
- Singsaas: How old are you?
- Training SQ/CC: Thirty-nine.
- Singsaas: How long have you been in your current position?
- Training SQ/CC: Nine months.
- Singsaas: How many command tours have you completed, including this one?
- Training SQ/CC: One.
- Singsaas: What is your primary career field?
- Training SQ/CC: Navigator.
- Singsaas: How many Airmen are assigned within your organization?
- Training SQ/CC: Six-hundred and eleven.
- Singsaas: Perfect. Remembering back to the start of this command tenure, describe an anecdote where you recognized the establishment of your personal leadership style.
- Training SQ/CC: Okay.
- I knew that coming into the door, though. I mean, I am me. I know who I am. I know what my strengths and weaknesses are. I know this organization was nowhere near what *my* strengths are, when I walked in the door. I mean I don't...

- Singsaas: When was the first time you realized what kind of leader you wanted to be?
- Training SQ/CC: That's a deep question.
- I don't know if this is what you are looking for, maybe things you would model, maybe things you would say, hey, if I was ever in the position of leadership I would like to model what they do.
- Singsaas: Sure.
- Training SQ/CC: It has fascinated me forever that, whether you are Gregg Popovich, or whether you are Bill Belichick that names, and organizations change all the time. Faces change all the time. I mean, except the two coaches. The organization of success doesn't change. I always said if I ever get a chance to lead something, what I want to do is create an organization that performs at a high level. But, people come and go all the time, including commander.
- Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Training SQ/CC: But, ultimately the organization still thrives every single day, despite the changes. This squadron is king of changing people. There is a shelf life to being an FTU (Formal Training Unit) instructor. So, one to two years are how long we keep people. Contrast that with the Operational Squadrons who keep people five, six, seven years, more than that in some cases. We are six hundred and eleven people large. Faces change. I do more in-processing and out-processing meetings than there is time in the day. People are rotating out, students are coming for upgrades, students are leaving, instructors are coming, and instructors are going. Trying to keep relative stability in the mist of all that. I have looked at organizations like the [New England] Patriots that literally had about a thousand names on the roster in the last decade, and yet, they are known to consistently win every single year.
- Singsaas: Sure.
- Training SQ/CC: Despite the fact that they have had twenty linebackers just using one position throughout Bill Belichick's fifteen years now. I look at ours the same way. We have eleven Instructor Pilot's in our books, but it will be eleven different IP's next year. Trying to keep that organizational stability, Gregg Popovich is another great example. Look how many people played on the [San Antonio] Spurs over the years. They win all the time. Not necessarily that

were trying to quote *win*, but those organizations are very stable. Even though there is a lot of change out, and a lot of rotation in people. They are very stable, high performing organizations.

That is what I want this squadron to be, because it has everything going against it in terms of stability. In terms of people changing out. I want people to feel like this is a stable environment in spite of the fact that we change people all the time, and that we are performing at a high level. That was my challenge day one. I don't know if that answers your question.

Singsaas: It is perfect. For folks that enter the squadron, what are some of the things that you tell them? To impart your leadership philosophy upon them.

Training SQ/CC: I meet with every new instructor and I try to give them what some of my thoughts are. I tell them first off, I have not had a single good idea yet in the organization. We had, we have literally done hundreds of things differently over here. We changed our training model. We are doing things that every single day we do different in this squadron. Trying to overcome a resource constraint environment with a number of folks we are trying to train, with the planes that we have, with the flying hours that are available. All these institutional challenges, none of which are easy to fix.

I tell folk's every day, we are absolutely trying to do different. We don't want to do dumb or dangerous for obvious reasons, but different is okay. I tell them I have not had one great idea, yet. We have tried hundreds of things in the squadron; none of those ideas have been mine. If I am ever accused of anything it is whatever the opposite of micromanagement is. Like, I won't know the details, because I don't micromanage. In fact I am the exact opposite. Right. I will give some people some general broad, general guidance, and then say, "Figure it out."

It is okay to try it and not work, and try something else. If we are finding out that things aren't working pretty often, that means we are not trying enough things differently. I sit down with folks, and I say listen, you know people always hear me say, "Handle it how you need to handle it." I say that all the time, everyday, which is my way of saying, use your authority that you have as an NCO (Non-Commissioned Officer), as an instructor, as a CGO (Company Grade Officer), as a FGO (Field Grade Officer), as a flight commander, as a ADO (Assistant Director of Operations). Whatever it is, my candid response to everybody is, "Handle it how you need to handle it." Which is my way of saying, "you

figure it out.” I am not going to micromanage. I sit down and talk to people through, first thing is we are in the people business, whether you like it or not.

Whether you joined the Air Force to fly airplanes or not. Whether you think you are doing this, or not, at the end of the day we are in the people business. We fly airplanes as a part of that. We train people as part of that. We go through the whole thing. But I will tell you day one [of command], I had literally, I am not joking, I had a hundred different things that needed a decision on. I was like we are broke. There is no reason a commander should have to, I mean...what do NCO's do, what do Senior NCO's do? What do flight chiefs do? What do flight commanders do? What do ADO's do? What does a DO do? What does a commander do?

At the end of the day the commander does make decisions, mostly strategic in nature. Of course there is some legal component to that, but I realized day one, if they are asking me these hundred things, most of which are not strategic, then something about the culture is off. Because these decisions should all be made amongst lower levels.

Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Training SQ/CC: Then I got to get it, why do people feel that they can't make a decision? It should be within their authority. Is there a trust factor in the organization we are missing? I have got to go out and try to sell, and this is not an indictment on a previous administration, that what is going to work for us going forward, is going to be the exact opposite of what we been doing.

Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Training SQ/CC: I want absolutely a chance to have a rudder in the water for the strategic direction of the unit. I want NCO's to be NCO's, and Senior NCO's to be Senior NCO's, and et cetera. First of that is how we are going to get to the right decisions, and second of all that is how we are going to get best out of our people.

Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Training SQ/CC: Everybody has worked in an environment where nobody except the commander made a decision. Some point in our career we all worked at all those environments. Right? Or, you were scared to make a decision or you were not empowered to make a decision. The bottom line is you did make a decision, and those are

dysfunctional organizations. A decision that should be made in five minutes takes twenty-five days to do. I had a lot of unwinding to do. As you can see, I think proof of that is, I was out flying yesterday, I haven't been in the office in a day in a half, and six-hundred, and eleven person squadron [gets up and walks to his desk] I got one folder and one piece of paper. Day one, it would have been like that [several phone books high]. *People making decisions.*

Training SQ/CC: Yeah, but people are making decisions. Probably got off exactly what you were asking for.

Singsaas: No. It is perfect; actually it ties into my next question. Which is, that's a form of transformation leadership where you are parting upon all your subordinates to really take control of the organization as a person, and as a leader. How do you tap in to their personal side as well to build up that confidence that they can make those decisions?

Training SQ/CC: One, you got to let them make the decisions. And you got to be willing to live with the ramifications. Every day I see, look let's take the run of normal gambit, executive Staff Summary Sheets', EPR's (Enlisted Performance Reports) where I am not a rater, an additional rater, or OPR's (Officer Performance Reports) where I am not rater, or additional rater, or you name it.

Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Training SQ/CC: Right? Letters of recommendation, across the gambit. I see stuff every day that if I started from scratch I might do it differently. Doesn't mean what they were doing is wrong; it just means we are all different people, and maybe they came in at it in a different way. Unless it is really going to have a major impact. I have a return rate of like .01 percent on products. Not even that, probably. I am willing to let people make decisions and I am willing live with the results, unless it crosses a boundary, or something, or a threshold that I am not comfortable with, which is rarely ever happens. Wide boundaries that I have.

I am willing to live with the results. Have you worked for a boss that got up and said all the things that you wanted to hear? Hey I am going to empower you, you are going to get to do your job, and at the end of the day, like they rewrote everything you gave them or something. Then they didn't even have the courtesy to come back, and give you the feedback on why, so that maybe you could do it better next time. I do that. I live with the results.

Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Training SQ/CC: The other thing is, in this squadron alone, there is a couple different hats people wear. They might wear a flight chief or flight commander hat. They might wear an ADO hat. But at the end of the day we all wear an instructor hat, and so there is that student-instructor relationship. That is something no matter what rank you are in this squadron, we all can identify with a student-instructor relationship. Instructors make lots of decisions on students. Really fundamental decisions like, do they advance to the next ride? Are they going to pass their check ride? In all those cases where they don't advance, or maybe they want to PA (Proficiency Advance) and skip a flight. There is paperwork by requirement that goes with that. An instructor makes a recommendation, the specialty chief concurs, or non-concurs, the DO concurs or non-concurs, and the commander approves.

I tell folks that I have gotten over a thousand sheets of those papers since I came here on twenty-one May, it is just the size of the squadron, and then I think we are probably eleven, twelve hundred at this point. Let's say the numbers are for twelve hundred. I am twelve hundred for twelve hundred on siding with the instructor recommendation. We bring that up a lot because what I am trying, and not necessarily for the folks that have been here, but for the new folks that are coming in. I trust you. You're the expert, I trust you. I don't just say it I do it. I don't send stuff back to rewrite. I take great pride in the OPR's that I write, and the strategic direction, and the bottom lines for officers, and stuff like that, but outside of that I am going to empower you, and live with the results. That is really the takeaway, if you are going to empower somebody you got to be willing to live with the results.

Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Training SQ/CC: As long as it is not illegal, immoral, or the obvious.

Singsaas: Right.

Training SQ/CC: It is easier said than done in the Air Force, because I think we all have worked for people that man, they want to talk about empowerment. They want to talk about thinking creatively, and outside the box, and doing things differently. But when you actually put that in the practice, it doesn't translate so well. Back to your authentic piece, if the ends and the ways do not match, if I hear you clucking, but you are not showing them that in your actions, then you won't succeed.

- Singsaas: How do you tap in to the families within the organization to convey that...
- Training SQ/CC: As crazy as it sounds in a squadron this size, you got to know your people. Back to you are in the people business. You get a sense of that real quick. Right? People are either coming into the office or they ain't. Just because you are the commander don't mean people shouldn't come into your office. Right? If nothing else say, hey, how are you doing? Who do you think is going to win the football game this weekend?
- You got to know your people, and again, that is easier said than done. We've all worked for bosses in the past that literally a year into their command was screwing names up. Not people new to the organization, people that have been in the organization the whole time, just because they never really left their office. I don't spend a ton of time in here. A lot of these folks I knew before I even got this job, because I have been in the wing five years. I am kind of a people person by trade to start with.
- I get out, I am an outgoing person, I go out and meet people, shake a lot of hands. Back to the family piece, you are not going to win that side unless you know your people first. Because those people are going home saying, "Hey, my commander cares about me." Outside of just the work discussion every day, "Hey, my commander knows, and my commander cares about me." The families at home build an idea, who the commander is, and how they are doing before you even meet them.
- Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Training SQ/CC: Right? The first piece between you and your member is disjointed; you are never going to win. You can talk about communication strategies, and all that, but the very first most basic part of that is you got to know and care about the people that work for you. If you do, and they take that home, the rest of it is easy. First off, the family will be happy to meet you, they will be glad, they will like, "Oh, yeah, my husband, or my wife talks about a lot about you." It is just more genuine, and it lasts, and you actually get the phone calls when they need help, and vise the other.
- Singsaas: What are some of the different ways you'll communicate with the families, and then...
- Training SQ/CC: We are a big Facebook. I know there are more popular things with the younger folks, you are old fashioned now if you use Facebook,

I guess with all the other things. But a lot of Facebook, a lot of spouse calls.

Training SQ/CC: People bring their spouses in the squadron to eat lunch. People bring their spouses in the squadron, and their children in the squadron to see what mommy and daddy do. Picnics, all your normal stuff. But we try to make this a family environment, here. Because, back to point A, we are in the people business. Every single day I am recruiting whether you've been in the Air Force one day, or nineteen years. I am recruiting you to stay. This is not a pat on the back, but we have a horrible [Airman] retention rate.

Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Training SQ/CC: But, the highest on base is in this squadron. And yet I fly them more than any other squadron. I about kill them from flying them so much.

Singsaas: Exactly.

Training SQ/CC: I mean they fly all the time. That is all we do here is fly. If anybody should be beat up, it should be these people here. Right? Our people, but our re-enlistment rates are way above any other squadron in one alpha eights.

Singsaas: And, you contribute it, that to your whole people concept?

Training SQ/CC: I do. Because every single day I am going out to figure out how to make their life better, and recruit and keep them in the Air Force. I tell them they are important, how important they are, to show the importance of the work that they do, and to reinforce the idea that somebody cares that you are up here twelve hours a day flying, and debriefing, and getting ready for tomorrows flight, oh, and by the way, you got to fly the day after that, and you didn't really think that you were going to have to, and now the family, you got to re-plan their...

Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Training SQ/CC: Tell them every single day, how important they are. I show them what they do matters, and care. Which means not just always that you are asking them to do more, and more, and more. Which means on the flip side there are times where you must protect them. Because you have asked them to do more, and more, and more. You got to give them a chance to catch up, to breathe. Otherwise, they are going to lose that resilience. Right?

Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Training SQ/CC: A recent example, we are way behind in 1A8 training. Right? There are a couple ways to look at this, and probably not part of your doctoral research. To tell you how way behind we are, we get a student, they come in here from previous training, whether it be DLI (Defense Language Institute, or Goodfellow Air Force Base, they start an academic class, they graduate, the academic piece. Then they essentially, big picture, they move to the flight line, they do the flight line training, then they move out of the squadron.

You can kind of measure days awaiting training. A couple ways here, one is from the time they show up to the time they start training. That is not quite as clean-cut because they may finish at Goodfellow earlier than they were predicted, and maybe we predicted them to start here in June, then they show up in February. We knew all along we predicted for them to start in June, so fact that they showed up here in February that involves other processes that are outside of this base. One real big indication is, okay, so what is the backlog between academics, and flying? That is the best way to measure how you are doing in [Airman] training. Right now, I got sixty-eight people trapped.

Singsaas: Wow.

Training SQ/CC: Between academics, and the flight line. They are averaging seventy-five days to go from their last academic event to their first flight. We should be like two. It is just a big indication of how backlogged we are. We have every reason in the world to fly all the time, every day, and never stop. How long are people going to last? My DNIF (Duties Not to Include Flying) rates are the lowest in the wing, and yet we fly the most. People know I care about them. Why? We just had two weeks off for Christmas, where I drew the line in the sand, and said I asked a ton of you this fall, we've killed it on the flying schedule, we probably over committed to what we had the ability to do it, and nobody complained.

Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Training SQ/CC: We are taking two weeks off.

Singsaas: The whole squadron?

Training SQ/CC: The whole squadron. I been pressured not to do that, and I said baring them firing me, or directing me otherwise, I will live with it. I didn't schedule a single event.

- Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Training SQ/CC: The OG (Operations Group Commander) asked me how we were going to account for our time; I said one word, nothing. Period, loves, hugs, and kisses. We didn't get any pushback. I didn't schedule one event. I said, we are going to use the passes to the maximum; we are going to use the pass to our advantage, as long as you are here, and we can see your face once every ninety-six hours. Let's try to do it where everybody doesn't necessarily have to take two weeks of leave that they may or may not have. Let's literally do nothing for two weeks. You know what we did for two weeks?
- Singsaas: Nothing.
- Training SQ/CC: Nothing!
- Singsaas: People came back refreshed and committed to your philosophy, probably.
- Training SQ/CC: People came back happy to see each other, ready to get back in the game. Oh, by the way, do you know how many long safety briefs and DUI monitors I had before all that? None. Do you know how many incidents we had in six-hundred and eleven people squadron over two weeks where we gave them no structure? Zero incidents. There's times you trust your people, and you take care of them, then they are going to be more willing to go to bat for you when you need them to fly that third time this week, and they really didn't have the energy or time to do it. They figure it out.
- Singsaas: That is awesome.
- Training SQ/CC: It goes both ways. Protecting them from themselves, I mean it is easy in the Air Force to say, do more. We say that all the time. On the flip side you got to be willing to say do less, at times.
- Training SQ/CC: It's got to balance.
- Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Training SQ/CC: I am not the end all, be all. I am just using my personal gamble. But, I have taken notice through the years, where I have worked for a lot of bosses who were always go, go, go, go, faster, faster, faster. We always talk about, "hey, after the next big event we are going to stop, and take a break, and we are going to catch our

thoughts,” and you never do. I make it a point to, if I say it, we are going to do it. In spite of all the external pressures.

- Singsaas: When you first took command of this squadron, you mentioned that you will communicate spouse calls, activities, some time off, and you also said Facebook, as well. Did you initiate or change the Facebook model?
- Training SQ/CC: We didn't have a Facebook model.
- Singsaas: It started from scratch...
- Training SQ/CC: Yeah.
- Singsaas: How did you build that?
- Training SQ/CC: One of the ways is [turns on cell phone and opens his Facebook application], A, my own thing, and let's see, this ain't no bragging, but I do know I few people in my life. This isn't all since 21 May [first day of command], I am just an outgoing person, to start. I have nine hundred and twenty-eight friends, probably everyone in the squadron, probably long before I even came over here, by the way. Because I been in the wing for five years.
- Singsaas: This is your personal page?
- Training SQ/CC: Right.
- Singsaas: Okay.
- Training SQ/CC: We also have a closed, hidden group called, ['Squadron Mascot' spouses]. We communicate that way too.
- Singsaas: How many people are in that group?
- Training SQ/CC: We only have forty-one at the moment, but that ebbs, and flows.
- Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Training SQ/CC: We also have a young population, so not everybody has a spouse. We do this then my wife, I mean every single month we have one or two spouse events. We have people that come to that who maybe aren't on Facebook. This is just one way we advertise it to go along with all the other ways. It is interesting, too, Facebook as a leader gives you feedback, too.

Singsaas: Exactly.

Training SQ/CC: Here is a real world example, let's see if I can find it real quick. When someone has a baby in this unit, we do something, frankly, actually there is a picture on here, I will show you. I didn't think it was that big of a deal, to be honest with you. I wondered if we should even continue doing this, because there are a lot of babies in the squadron. I mean, it is a big squadron, a lot of babies.

Singsaas: Young squadron, too.

Training SQ/CC: Young squadron. A lot of first time babies. We do this little bundle, with this little onsies with a [mascot] package wrapped in this little diaper bundle. I mean it is really cute. Looks like something you would see on Pinterest.

Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Training SQ/CC: Part of me, in the back of my mind was like, is this worth continuing? There are so many things going on in the world, and in this squadron. Is this worth the limited time we have? Then I just happened, literally, and I never told the kid this, and I don't know if he realizes it, because he is also a friend with me [on Facebook], but I saw something from a young [Airman] in our squadron. Let's see if I can find him, hope I am not lying to you [scrolls through Facebook newsfeed].

This is a young [Airman], and his wife in our squadron, who I am a personal friend with here. I mean not that I hang out with him, or anything like that, but personal friends with on Facebook. Then I saw something one day. Then I realized, because I am not that smart to start with, that the importance and the value of Facebook, or social media in general, in terms of getting feedback sometimes that you might not have gotten, or might not have valued until you saw it in a way where you realized he wasn't saying it just because I am there, or whatever. Half of these people don't even realize that they are friends with me, which many times I can kind of see when somebody is maybe not having a good point in life. Jump in, and help.

Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Training SQ/CC: They never really think about, I probably know it because I see their Facebook post.

- Singsaas: While you are looking that up. How do you circle around, and make that personal contact?
- Training SQ/CC: If it is a positive I just continue, and this is what I was going to show. I saw something that they had posted, and I am like it is important and we're going to continue it. If I hadn't seen it, I might have said, "Nah, we don't have time for this [making baby onesie's], we have other stuff that we need to be doing."
- If it is negative, I never go directly and say, "Well, sometimes." If you realize that they are real depressed, or that, sometimes you just want to go to them, and the best way to start a conversation is to just say, be honest with them, "Hey, man, I noticed on Facebook, I noticed things are not going well, is there anything that I can do to help you as a wing-man?"
- Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Training SQ/CC: If you start with that honesty, it is the only way to do it. I saw this, I never let him know I saw that [shows Facebook post from Airman in squadron].
- Singsaas: It says, "It is the little things sometimes, thankful for some caring leadership," and it is a picture of the onsie, and the diaper bag with the squadron's logo on it.
- Training SQ/CC: Probably a couple weeks before that, I was thinking about if it was worth us still putting those together. It is really insignificant in terms of a gift.
- Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Training SQ/CC: Right? It's probably a dollar onesie with a little thing ironed on [mascot] patch, and three diapers, and a little diaper strap.
- Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Training SQ/CC: I mean it is insignificant.
- Singsaas: It's about four hours in an infant's life. Worth it, wearing that...
- Training SQ/CC: But, I saw that Facebook post, and I realized this is an incredibly powerful feedback tool. This is from an airman that I don't know that I have ever, I mean, with six-hundred and eleven people, I am sure I have had personal conversation with him. It is not like I am hanging out with him every day. Right?

- Singsaas: Right.
- Training SQ/CC: You get a lot of feedback sometimes. I know because, again I am not like best friends with him. I know he is not putting on there to placate to his boss, or whatever. There are fifteen levels of leadership between us. He's a senior Airman. He is not doing it for any conniving political gain, or anything like that. The feedback, I am like, you know what? We are going to keep doing that that is important.
- Singsaas: You are appreciative of it. What are some of the other posts that will be on the units Facebook page?
- Training SQ/CC: From the unit, we try to keep it anything that's about family. Right, it could be something simple, like the Force Support Squadron weekly activities we get every Monday morning. That has a lot of good information on there. How many of people will actually print that out, or send that home to their family?
- Singsaas: Never.
- Training SQ/CC: Never, right? Just one more thing you delete when you are trying to get to the other eighty emails that need attention.
- Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Training SQ/CC: You almost get numb to it as the member. We put things like that, so that when the members don't even forward it to home, and they never do. We put that on there, because then the spouses are seeing it. We put pictures from events that we do. Event squadron based stuff. I make it a point on my personal Facebook page. I don't put anything work related. I put family stuff. I don't do anything for any sort of political messaging; I just keep it about me.
- Like you said, people know other people through their Facebook page. People know me because I am very genuine, authentic. It's about my family, and normal stuff. Things I think that are interesting in life. I don't cross the streams. Even though I am probably friends with most people in the unit, I don't do anything with a hidden agenda on my personal Facebook page. It is about me and my kids, and my family.
- Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

- Training SQ/CC: Normal stuff. I think that's key, because I think when, if I were Facebook friends with let's say, you're boss, or you're bosses, boss. You can easily see where people are all they are just manipulating that for their job purposes, or whatever. I am who, I am.
- Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Training SQ/CC: My Facebook posts haven't changed in the whatever, six years I been on Facebook. It is what it is, you know? I think that helps in that authentic nature, but even though I think that ties back to the fact that I walk up and down these halls every day, and there is not a stranger in the squadron. I start the *online social relationships* and the fact that I know and care about them, personally.
- Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Training SQ/CC: Then I think it easily translates to the social world. If all I did was hide out up here in this office, and never leave it. You couldn't do that alone. There has to be the genuine interest and caring about your people to start with, and then this is just a extension of that.
- Singsaas: Maybe the twenty-four-seven concept of what you do during the day at work translates back home as you take care of your family, and live a personal life.
- Training SQ/CC: A hundred percent agree.
- Singsaas: We have about a minute left. I will ask two more questions. First one, knowing how passionate you are about your leadership style and the strength of your family, and how that translates to the organization. Say you have the Air Force Chief of Staff's ear for one day. How would you recommend to them, how to improve their social media platform?
- Training SQ/CC: First off it needs to be more authentic.
- Singsaas: I agree.
- Training SQ/CC: Again, obviously some of this is under academic freedom. Right?
- Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Training SQ/CC: If you are going to have a Facebook page, or whatever social media strategy. It is real easy to see when it is basically done by their Public Affairs staff, and that is all that it is done by. It's got to a combination, right? It's got to be a little bit of your personal

stuff, so that the people feel like they know, and they can connect with you. Even some of the challenges you are doing as a father, as a professional. There is going to be a combination of standard PA type stuff, but it's got to be authentic. It's got to resonate with you. You can real quickly see some of the Facebook feeds, or whatever, the Twitter feeds, whatever you want to call it. Where it is just not authentic. I mean it's just the propaganda party line.

Singsaas: I was just going to say a PA probably can't...

Training SQ/CC: Sometimes you have to be willing to step out, and say, you just got to be a little more authentic. You can do it in a very nuanced way where you are not sparking controversy, and causing chaos. It's got to be authentic. Why do people identify with Robin Olds? Right? We bring up a lot of names in the Air Force, right? No more so in today's time than Robin Olds. Chuck Yeager gets brought up all the time. There are probably two or three more I can't think off the top of my head that, but what would Robin Olds do?

Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Training SQ/CC: What made Robin Olds a great leader? Was he smarter than everybody else?

Singsaas: He did what he knew was right.

Training SQ/CC: Partly. I don't think he was smarter than everybody else.

He wasn't born with some innate give of leadership that no one else had. First off, it all resonates that the dude is authentic. Whether you are dealing with Robin Olds in person, via paper, I mean this was long before email. People that knew Robin knew who Robin Olds was. They knew what kind of person he was, right? They knew him. He was authentic. How often in today's environment does someone get put in an important position, and they almost become like, I don't know how to say it properly, they go from having a personality to almost where they are antiseptic.

It is like they are so scared to say or do anything that they almost lose their sense of soul, and identity, and they have no authenticity. Right? I'd say first off if you are in a position of power that is exactly when you want to be authentic. Whether it is in social media, whether it's in person, whether it is on TV, whether on the radio. Be authentic, have an opinion. The first thing you realize about senior leaders is they quit having opinions.

- Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Training SQ/CC: There are a lot of other great leaders, but you watch and see a lot of people be put in a position of power, and all of a sudden they have no opinion about anything. What does that do for you? How does that inspire somebody?
- Singsaas: Probably takes away the sole reason why they were put in that position in the first place.
- Training SQ/CC: A hundred percent agree. They are going to look around, okay, and they are going to see examples where people tried to do that, and they got fired. Okay, agree with them. Right? There are some paid cases where probably someone being a little bit authentic and got them a little sideways, and got fired. That doesn't make it right to go without having an opinion, and having no personality, and no nothing, and inspire nobody. Right? It is what it is. Right?
- I think there is a nuanced way to keep your sense of identity, and still be a party person, but still be authentic. I think there is a way to do that. It is hard, yeah. You got to be careful, yeah. There are landmines out there, yes, but if you lose that sense of identity you are going to inspire no one. You might as well not even be in the job. My opinion.
- Singsaas: I want to ask you one more question.
- Training SQ/CC: Okay.
- Singsaas: It ties into everything you just said. How would you define successful leadership communication?
- Training SQ/CC: [Long pause] That's a tough one to answer. What is your goal of communication? What are you ultimately trying to do, right? You are trying to get someone to buy in to a concept or an idea.
- Singsaas: To believe.
- Training SQ/CC: To believe. Whether or not you are successful is, are their actions showing that they believe, that they buy in, that they hear what you are saying, and they believe you, and they trust you.
- Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

- Training SQ/CC: They are willing to try to do what you are asking them to do. Right? It is not, did we communicate, did they hear us? What are their actions? Are they believing in it? What's the evidence suggesting? If you are the commander of a flying squadron, and nobody can ever fly, because they are always DNIF then obviously they are not buying what the squadron is doing. Because the quickest way to see whether or not the squadron thinks what you are doing is good is what are your DNIF rates?
- Especially with the old grey beards [nearly retired officers]. Watch the grey beards. If they want to come to your squadron, things must be doing okay. If the grey beards don't want to come around, they aren't buying what you are selling. Right? There is all kind of ways but ultimately, are they believing you?
- Singsaas: Perfect.
- Training SQ/CC: There is probably a way more eloquent way to say that.
- Singsaas: That is all we have for today.
- Training SQ/CC: There are people that actually are putting some analysis and some opinions and good, bad or different, and it stirs the pot. It's a fine line. I know that every general officer would say I am crazy. But, I am telling you if you go into that role where you have no personality as a leader, because you are so afraid that you are going to offend someone, or, you know what I am talking about. Right?
- Singsaas: Absolutely.
- Training SQ/CC: It is so ineffective. That is why we, I think that it is just crazy that we got a three hundred and twenty thousand person strong force, or three hundred and thirteen thousand, whatever it is today. This is the lowest it has been in history.
- Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Training SQ/CC: Right? Vietnam War was greater than half a million. How many millions of people, since Robin Olds was in the Air Force, has been in the Air Force? A bunch, right? I think the thing is the tragedy we are talking about, as great as Robin Olds was, we are talking about someone from forty years ago. Surely, we've had a bunch of great leaders since then. Right? It's just hard in the Air Force, those general officers, they lose their identity the second they get promoted.

- Singsaas: None of those examples of leaders, ever made general officer.
- Training SQ/CC: Even better point. Isn't that crazy?
- Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Training SQ/CC: I don't know how the, obviously I am no senior leader, so I am not faced with this challenge, but that would be the challenge I would have. If I got up every single day, and you are a general officer, probably even a colonel, but definitely a general officer and above, how do you find that fine line? Where you are a party person, but you are a party person with a conscience, and an identity. Right, wrong, or different. If you are authentic, people buy that. Doesn't mean they agree with everything you say, I have had lots of bosses that I bought into. Doesn't mean I agree with half of what they are saying.
- Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Training SQ/CC: But, because they were authentic, and they were genuine, and you felt like you knew, and you understood them. In a way you kind of bought in.
- Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Training SQ/CC: Or, you would at least go out and try to support them. It is when you see that other stuff.
- Singsaas: What I wrote down was, "How do you define the fine line."
- Training SQ/CC: And, that's the question. Some say you either get fired, or you don't.
- Singsaas: Yep.
- Training SQ/CC: It happens.
- Singsaas: Because at the end of the day, that whole person concept you still have your family.
- Training SQ/CC: I still have my family.
- Singsaas: Mm-hmm (affirmative).